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GST INCLUSIVE

STALLIONS SAVOUR FESTIVE SEASON

By Daniel Kuziow

The spirit of the season has hit the National League in a big way with the Marconi Stallions receiving the gift of three precious competition points after previously going five games without a single point.

Friday night's resurgent 4-2 victory against the Wollongong Wolves has seen the Stallions move off the very bottom of the table and equal with the Northern Spirit on 11 points, who have the luxury of a couple of catch up games.

It was the Stallion's second victory in this year's competition against the South Coast side and it was young Soccerroo Alex Brosque that captured all the headlines. In the opening round of the season Brosque was on hand to score a brace and share a draw for his side. In round 15 Brosque promptly delivered, this time with a hat trick that ultimately destroyed the Wolves.

Brosque scored goals in the 21st, 47th and 68th minutes with a fourth going to Angelo Costanzo. The Wolves added some respectability to the scoreline in the final ten minutes, with Dino Mennillo and then Stuart Young getting goals.

Another team to grab an

impressive away victory on Friday night were the Brisbane Strikers who duly disposed of the Northern Spirit three goals to two. The result stretched the Strikers unbeaten record to five games as goals from Peter Grierson and Anthony Roche buried the Spirit side, returning to competition after several weeks' absence.

After only six minutes a David Pilic corner was met by Grierson who managed to get a touch on the ball and score at the far post, and eight minutes from half time Brisbane doubled their advantage when Joshua Rose outpaced the defence on the left to cross for Anthony Roche who coolly beat Spirit goalkeeper Paul Henderson.

Ten minutes into the second half John Hutchinson put the home side on the board, latching onto an Adam Kwasnik cross from the right. But the goal did little to incite a home team revival as Grierson scored his second goal to make it three one.

Four minutes into extra time, Spirit substitute Brent Fisher scored the last goal of the match.

In the round's remaining four games, the Perth Glory the Olympic Sharks and Sydney United had wins, while South Melbourne and Newcastle United played out

a draw.

Starting the wrap in Perth, a flurry of late second half action helped keep the home side second on the table, while the match condemned the Power to their first loss in two matches.

Three goals in the space of five minutes brought the game to life and it was midfielder Scott Miller who opened the scoring on 72 minutes after he exchanged a neat one-two with Bobby Despotovski to score from just inside the penalty area.

Parramatta went forward from the resulting kickoff and Kosta Salapasis took advantage of a misunderstanding between Shane Pryce and Jamie Harnwell. He went one-on-one with Jason Petkovic before putting the ball underneath the Glory keeper for the equaliser.

Glory's second goal came within three minutes of the Power equaliser as David Tarka rose to score his first NSL goal. Returning from international duty with the Young Soccerroos, Tarka met an inswinging Despotovski corner and powerfully headed home what would prove to be the game's winning goal.

Leaders the Olympic Sharks made it seven wins on the trot with a 3-1 home victory against the

Melbourne Knights. Hiroyuki Ishida brought the game to life with the opening goal in the 39th minute as he pounced on a deflection, following a free kick from the edge of the 18-yard box.

Olympic made it two just after half time following a sublime piece of skill from Tommy Pondeljak. His 30-yard free kick was perfectly aimed as it sailed over the Knight's defensive wall and off Martin John's right hand post for a superb piece of finishing.

The Melbourne side responded however and almost straight from the kick off, half time substitute Henry Fa'Arodo had pulled a goal back when put through on the right side of the penalty box and he drilled his shot inside the left post. Former Knight Joel Porter though wrapped up the game in the final stages of play when he broke clear to round the keeper for his fifth goal of this campaign.

The showdown between South Melbourne and Newcastle United ended in a 1-1 draw despite United scoring both goals.

Newcastle who were going into this match with a fairly average away record once again had Joel Griffiths to thank, as his 6th minute strike gave them a shock lead. Griffiths fooled the

defence turned inside markers and shot from long-range into the bottom left corner.

But the momentum of South gunning for their seventh consecutive home victory eventually told on the visiting side on 72 minutes when Travis Dodd turned the ball into his own net.

In the last of the round 15 games, Sydney United ended their barren run of late with a single goal victory over the Football Kingz.

An 11th minute goal from midfielder Anthony Doumanis was enough to settle a scrappy contest and hand United a victory that pushes them up to fifth place on the table. United custodian Vanja Ivesa however ensured his side would retain a clean sheet with a penalty save after he himself had felled Andy Vlahos and Ivesa then produced another important save in the dying minutes, bravely diving at the feet of Raf de Gregorio when he was through on an open goal.

Adelaide City played out the bye.



Alex Tobin of the Spirit challenges Anthony Roche of the Strikers for the ball during the NSL round 15 match between the Northern Spirit and the Brisbane Strikers at North Sydney Oval.

THIRD STINT FOR MATIC AT FORCE

By Allan Crisp

Take care! Zoran Matic is back as caretaker-coach of the Adelaide City Force and gearing to add to his 447 NSL game coaching record.

Opponents beware! Matic, the man with the Midas touch, also would like to extend his trophy collection beyond the three he won with City, while steering the club to a record sixth grand final appearance.

Expect few team changes and a general tightening of the defence during the remainder of the season because the Matic creed is based on stability of selection and a rock solid back line.

The Force, circa 2002/2003 holds no secrets to Matic who has seen all of the home matches this season deducing that only reigning champions Olympic Sharks outplayed his team.

He is bemused, however that City could score three goals away to

Melbourne Knights yet lose 4-3.

"I can't remember the last time we scored three goals away and still lost," Matic said.

"I know fans like to see goals but I think they would rather see the team win 1-0 than lose 4-3."

Matic was lured away from his tran-



Zoran Matic: The new Adelaide City caretaker coach.

quil nine-month hibernation by the persistent pressure exerted by City president Bob D'Ottavi.

"Zoran is the logical replacement, because he knows the players and how to get the best out of the players.

"We wanted Zoran because he still has the passion and has freshened up after a nice break.

"We haven't written off the season and I know we have the players who can take us to the finals," D'Ottavi concluded.

Matic concurred, "The aim is to play in the finals, but we first need to build some momentum," he said.

"If the players are prepared to listen and work hard then anything is possible."

Matic replaces former champion player Charley Villani, who resigned after 13 games in charge.

Villani alleged interference and constant criticism of his training methods and team selections from some members of the clubs board of management.

'Gentleman Jim', Calls It A Day

(Special Tribute)
By John Economos

JAMES ('Gentleman Jim') OSBORNE, Australia's oldest former Australian Soccer International, sadly passed away just two days before Christmas last week at the grand age of 94, whilst surrounded by his family and close friends.

Born and bred in Wallsend, Newcastle, over recent years Mr Osborne had resided in the Sydney suburb of Earlwood with his long loving wife, Edna to whom he was married for 62 years.

Jim Osborne proudly wore the 'Green and Gold' for Australia from 1933 to 41.

The highly talented and

gifted goalscoring left midfielder made his debut on an International arena in 1933 at the Sydney Cricket Ground when Australia clashed with New Zealand.

It was James' fabulous, friendly disposition that earned him the proud tag from one of his team players, of 'Gentleman Jim'.

(Special Tribute James Osborne on page 3)



JAMES OSBORNE: Australia's oldest former Soccer International, with his beloved wife of 62 years Edna.

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BY DANIEL KUZIW

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Joey Didulica has admitted the competition for the goalkeeper's spot at Ajax may force him to leave Amsterdam.

The Australian, third choice at the start of the season, has played most of Ajax's games this campaign due to injuries to Maarten Stekelenburg and Bogdan Lobont.

And he certainly hasn't let coach Ronald Koeman down with a number of fine performances in both the Eredivisie and Champions League. With highly-rated Stekelenburg and Romanian number one Lobont both nearing full fitness, Didulica has to assess his options.

His current deal expires at the end of the season and he has yet to sign the fresh terms offered to him by the current Dutch champions. "It will get difficult. With Maarten Stekelenburg, Ajax have the new Edwin van der Sar in their midst and Bogdan Lobont is a Romanian international," Didulica told television station AT5.

"If I stay one of the others must be disappointed by Ajax. I'm not sure that will happen."



Joe Didulica: May be forced to leave Ajax.

Mark Viduka says he is happy to stay at Leeds United and fight for his place.

This comes despite the return of England International Robbie Fowler and Viduka told the Yorkshire Post, "Robbie's return may not be good for us strikers, but it's good for the team and it means the gaffer will have the whole squad to choose from."

"I want to play, but at the end of the day it's up to the gaffer to pick the team. I've had a problem with my shoulder but it's not too bad now and I just want to do the best I can for Leeds."



Mark Viduka: Willing to fight for his spot at Leeds United.

Bolton Wanderers manager Sam Allardyce has blasted speculation suggesting he is prepared to offer Mark Bosnich a contract at The Reebok Stadium.

With the Chelsea goalkeeper facing an uncertain future, and a possible lengthy ban, pending a final decision on his punishment for testing positive for cocaine during a random

drugs test, any move looked extremely unlikely.

The ex-Manchester United star is reportedly keen to fight to clear his name but his Stamford Bridge career looks over, as the Londoners



Paul Okon: Receiving the plaudits at Leeds United.

are likely to dispense of his services.

One thing that is for certain is that the Australian will not be joining Wanderers.

"There is no truth in the rumour at all," Allardyce told Bolton's official website.

"Mark Bosnich will not be joining Bolton Wanderers Football Club."

"It really baffles me as to how these rumours come about," he concluded.

In further news surrounding Bosnich, the Chelsea gloveman has been charged with disrepute by the English FA.

The former international has been found guilty of taking a banned substance and thus breached the Football Association's doping regulations.

Bosnich has already been admitted to a clinic in Roehampton, suffering from severe clinical depression. He is banned from all footballing activities until the charges have been answered.

A statement on the FA's website said: "The Football Association can confirm that Mark Bosnich of Chelsea FC has been charged with breaches of FA Rules E1 and E26...Bosnich will be suspended from all football activities until the

charges have been heard."

Terry Venables has praised the impact made by Socceroos skipper Paul Okon in the heart of the Leeds midfield and believes the 30-year-old is improving with every game.

The Leeds boss told the club's official website, www.lufc.co.uk: "I am delighted for him."

"I'm disappointed he wasn't able to be involved earlier but now he's here he's had four games and in each game he's got better. "He takes a lot of care with his passing."

Okon joined the Yorkshire club in the off-season as a free agent, after his loan stint at First Division Watford, but was forced to look on from the reserves for most of the season after a string of niggling injuries.

However, he has made a centre-midfield spot his own in the last month and has built a strong partnership with Eirik Bakke.

Australian midfielder Danny Tiatto may require surgery for a hernia after being forced off injured at half-time in Manchester City's Boxing Day win over Aston Villa.



Danny Tiatto: The Manchester City player may require a hernia operation.

The midfielder was undergoing tests Friday to determine the extent of the injury. If Tiatto is ruled out, it will increase the likelihood of City boss Kevin Keegan entering the

transfer market when the signing window opens in January.

"With Danny getting the injury which could be, and at this stage I am only saying could be, long term we may have to look at it with relation to the transfer window and bringing in a player," Keegan said.

"It could be strain or a hernia, we will have to wait and see but he will not be available for the trip to."

A little over a year after being named the worst goalkeeper in the English Premier League, Socceroos Mark Schwarzer has jumped to the top of the list.



Simply the best: Mark Schwarzer is leading the charge as the Premier League's best shot-stopper.

Before helping Middlesbrough to a 3-1 victory over Manchester United on Boxing Day, Schwarzer had pulled off 80 saves with a shot-save percentage of 82 per cent - the league's best, according to statistician company Opta.

His form has been a remarkable turnaround from 13 months ago when Opta named him as the worst keeper in the Premiership.

Middlesbrough was threatening relegation at that time but with Schwarzer's surge in form the club now sits in eighth position.

American keeper Brad Friedel (Blackburn) was in second position with a save percentage of 81 per cent, while Dutchman Edwin Van der Sar (Fulham) was third with 76 per cent - making it a foreign 1-2-3 in the goalkeeping category.

MOORE SUPPORT FOR CRAIG

Defender Craig Moore should be next in line to skipper the Socceroos ahead of Leeds star Harry Kewell, according to former national team captain Paul Wade.

The captaincy debate began to rage when Paul Okon spent a frustrating three months on the outer at Elland Road following his switch from First Division Watford.

However, the current

Socceroos captain has won a place in the heart of Leeds' midfield and seems certain to cement his place for the February 12 friendly against England if he can maintain his form and fitness.

Wade, who made 84 full international appearances for Australia - 43 as captain, told The Daily Telegraph that Moore has shown a greater commitment to the Socceroos than Kewell in the past and should be rewarded for this - if Okon is overlooked.

"When it comes to captaining his country, even though he (Kewell) has ambitions in that area, he needs to show more commitment to turning up to Socceroos games."

"The Socceroos captain must stand up and put country before club and that's where my issue has been: do you want to play for your club, or do you want to play for your country?"

"If you want to play for your club, you can't be the captain of the Socceroos."

"That is my big issue and I'll never change my mind over that."

Moore has often made himself available to coach Frank Farina



Craig Moore: The Rangers star is being touted as the next Socceroo captain.

when other European-based players have not and has endeared himself not only to Wade, but to the Australian soccer public as well.

Wade added: "I believe Craig Moore (should be the next captain).

"To me, he has never suggested that playing for (Glasgow) Rangers is more important than playing for the green and gold."

"He could be captain for a while, as Harry Kewell could - no doubt about it."

"Never one to mince his words, Wade sent out a clear message to Kewell."

"If Harry Kewell says he wants to play for the Socceroos ahead of playing for Leeds United, I would say 'yep, fine'."

"But unless he changes that attitude, then I would say 'no, no way in the world' - and I don't care how great a footballer he is."

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'Gentleman Jim' Calls It A Day

The always surprisingly sprightly Mr Osborne had celebrated his 94th year on the 4th of last May with his wife Edna and close family members.

Most sadly, James lost his beloved Edna last May, to whom he was very happily married for 62 years. This happy marriage yielded three children, two daughters, (Kay and Denise) as well as a son, Barry.

As well the proud Osborne couple is today survived by six Grand children plus no less than seven Great Grand children.

Three years ago and in recognition for his undeniable loyal playing service to the Australian National team, Mr Osborne was inducted into the inaugural Australian Soccer 'Hall Of Fame'.

Just a year earlier, Mr Osborne had been inducted into the 'Hunter Region Sporting Hall of Fame'.

James Osborne's outstanding career included having scored a massive 400 goals in just over 450 first class appearances.

This was an incredible feat considering the fact James Osborne achieved this outstanding strike-statistic as an attacking left midfielder.

However a record which James was extremely proud of, was the fact that in all those games he had never once been cautioned, let alone sent off, by any referee.

This former Australian International warrior played in Newcastle for the then two great sides Wallsend and Weston.

James Osborne made his debut in the Wallsend first team at the tender age of 18.

Because Australian Soccer back in that era could not provide a living, in seeking employment young Jimmy drifted down to Sydney where he played for two seasons with the powerful club, Granville.

In 1936 the lethal left Novocastrian midfielder signed with the giant Sydney side, Metters.

'Gentleman Jim' symbolically ended his long and illustrious career with Metters at the age of 37 in 1945, the very same year

(Special Tribute)
By John Economos

World War II also ended.

The 1937 England touring captain, Bernard Joy, rated James Osborne amongst the very best of the Australian international players.

This grand old sterling Australian warrior had toured with the Australian side to New Caledonia (1933) and New Zealand (1936).

The high scoring left midfielder represented Australia against

New Zealand (1936), India (1938), and would you believe Palestine (1939), as well as against China (1941).

In 1937 James Osborne was bestowed the captaincy of the NSW team which did battle against the strong touring English Amateurs.

'Gentleman Jim' played during an era that boasted Soccer stars such as Jimmy McNabb, 'Digger' Evans, George Smith as well as

Joe Marston, Reg Date and Alf Quill in his later years.

As a teenager whilst still in school at Wallsend, James Osborne had initially burst onto the Soccer scene as a slashing striker.

However even before he had completed his scholastic studies, young James developed into an outstanding attacking left half (midfielder)-the very same position that in later years he proudly played from in the Australian National squads.

Ironically, although young James felt very comfortable as a striker, one day one of his team-



JAMES OSBORNE: On his debut for Australia in 1933 against New Zealand at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

mates, (a left midfielder), suddenly became ill before an important match and was ruled unfit to take the pitch.

The young and ambitious James Osborne was selected to fill that vacated position, a position which he rapidly relished, then cemented, as his very own.

He clung to the left midfield spot with such zeal that he retained it throughout his entire career, even in the National teams, till the very day he retired.

James Osborne's funeral service was held yesterday at 10 am, (Monday 30th December), at Leppington Lawn Cemetery, Camden Valley Way, in Sydney.

The Management, Staff and readers of ABSW extend to 'Gentleman Jim's' surviving children, Kay, Barry and Denise, and six Grand children, plus seven Great Grand children, its sincerest condolences.



JAMES OSBORNE: Australia's oldest former Soccer International, seen here last year with his beloved wife of 62 years, Edna, celebrating his 93rd birthday.

Asia invite for Oceania

Socceroos' coach Frank Farina has hailed the announcement that Asia wants Australia, or at least the Oceania champions, to play in the prestigious and lucrative Asian Championships in the future.

"It's fantastic news," Farina told *The Daily Telegraph*.

Asian Football Confederation (AFC) boss, Peter Velappan, says he wants an Oceania team in the tournament, which receives wide television coverage throughout the region.

The major advantage for Australia would be the chance to compete in a geographically convenient location and in matches that have true meaning for all participants, rather than in a series of contrived friendly matches.

Velappan sees such a move as beneficial to the Asian nations as well.

"You guys need international matches and we need to get used to playing physical teams like Australia and New Zealand," Velappan

said from AFC headquarters in Kuala Lumpur.

"The last World Cup has shown that modern football is mostly about aggression.

"We need more exposure to this European type of game.

"It's an exciting prospect and I support it wholeheartedly."

The qualifying draw for the 2004 Asian titles in China have just been announced, so it is too late for the next series, but 2008 looks a good possibility, according to the influential Velappan.

The Asian chief said that



Socceroo coach Frank Farina.

the opportunity to embrace the Oceania champions was too good to ignore any longer.

"First there are the football values because both areas would be given a golden opportunity to improve their playing standards," he said.

"Then there's the commercial aspect due mainly to television. Perhaps Oceania should now invite the Asian champions to its Nations Cup."

Velappan also welcomed the news that Oceania finally received direct access to the World Cup.

"I sincerely hope they prove their worth in Germany," Velappan said.

And Oceania president Basil Scarsella agrees, noting that talks were already under way to form an alliance with the AFC.

"We aim to set up a strategic relationship at all levels of football, from the senior national teams to the under-17s and the clubs," Scarsella said.

"Working together with the Asians can only benefit both areas."

TOP TWO MATILDAS RETIRE

OLYMPIC captain Alison Forman and Matildas team-mate Sharon Black have announced their retirement from international soccer.

Forman, who led Australia in their Olympic Games debut in Sydney, appeared in 77 A-interna-

tionals.

She is one of only four players who has been competed in all of Australia's major campaigns - the 2000 Olympics, the 1999 and 1995 World Cups and the unsuccessful qualifiers for the inaugural World Cup in 1991.

Black is also an

Olympian and played at the 1999 World Cup.

The 31-year-old mid-

fielder scored 20 goals in 61 games for Australia.



Matilda stars Alison Forman (left) & Sharon Black have announced their retirements from international soccer.



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WALTER VALERI: NEW SOCCER CANBERRA PRESIDENT

By Graham Cooke

Walter Valeri, the man who has lived and breathed ACT soccer for the best part of 30 years, reached the administrative pinnacle of the game when he won the presidential ballot against Phil Rutherford at the Soccer Canberra annual meeting last week.

In choosing him in succession to Steve Doszpot, the clubs plumped for a consensus man who will seek to guide rather than dictate the direction of the game in the territory over the next two years.

But in doing so they have also elected to shoulder more of the burden and responsibility for policy and planning. Valeri, previously chairman of the Senior League, summed up the new environment in his nomination speech when he said: "Walter Valeri will not fix things for soccer in the ACT - we all will."

What he did announce was a proposal for a three-

year strategic plan to involve juniors, seniors and women, while promising an administration of consultation and transparency. He also sought to involve his defeated opponent, saying Rutherford's experience and business acumen would be needed in the difficult times ahead.



Walter Valeri was elected as Soccer Canberra's new President.

Just how difficult had already been made apparent by treasurer Dion Cannell, who announced a loss for the year of \$114,261. Valeri said a similar result in 2003

would make Soccer Canberra insolvent.

A lengthy debate ended in delegates accepting an overall 30 per cent increase in fees for the coming season even though some speakers feared a rise of this magnitude would drive people away from the sport.

Chief executive Alan Lee said there were sponsorship possibilities on the horizon, and if these eventuated it might be possible to reduce fees in 12 months.

In the election for vice president former Hong Kong youth international Robert Reis defeated Dean Grandy while Jose Del Rio (technical development) and Paul Jones (marketing and development) were elected unopposed to the two vacant directors' positions.

Paul Whittingham, of the Majura club, joins the board as chairman of the Junior League; Vince Taglieri will act as chairman of the Senior League until a replacement for Valeri is found.

Not up for re-election were Cannell and the chairman of Soccer Referees Canberra, Chris Conti.



Mark Bosnich: Asked to explain how he tested positive for cocaine.

Bosnich told: explain drug result or go

Mark Bosnich has been given an ultimatum by English premier league club Chelsea to explain how he tested positive to cocaine or face the sack.

The Australian goalkeeper was given the ultimatum yesterday after the Football Association confirmed his B sample came back positive.

Bosnich is expected to plead his innocence and claim he has no idea how the drug entered his system.



He has been suspended without his STG42,000 (\$A119,000) a week pay since his A sample tested positive last month.

Bosnich has played seven games in two years at Chelsea, and has not played in over 12 months, after plummeting to third choice keeper at Stamford Bridge.

He has one year left on his lucrative contract but the club has been seeking a way to offload the expensive spectator for some time and this will provide the perfect opportunity.

Force receives final Hindmarsh offer

A final offer was put to the Adelaide City Force for its continued use of Hindmarsh Stadium.

South Australian Recreation, Sport and Racing Minister Michael Wright said the package included a fixed hire fee of \$4,500, plus GST, for each remaining home game, rather than the previous fee of \$8,800, plus GST.

Mr Wright said it was the lowest fee charged for home matches at any National Soccer League stadium in Australia.

The Force earlier this season signed a deal to play its home matches at Norwood Oval, in Adelaide's eastern suburbs, claiming it could save

\$20,000 a match if it moved.

No matches have yet been played at Norwood after Soccer Australia ruled the Force would stay at Hindmarsh.



Mr Wright said the new offer was based on the use of only the main grandstand, which seats 5,500 specta-

tors.

The offer was subject to the Force demonstrating that no patrons would be financially disadvantaged through ticket prices.

"This offer ... provides Adelaide City Force with a win-win situation because this will give a better bottom line to (club president) Mr (Bob) D'Ottavi," Mr Wright said.

"This is a once-in-the-world offer ... it's no good him (D'Ottavi) or anyone else coming back and asking for another offer because this is really putting in place an offer that can't be compared."

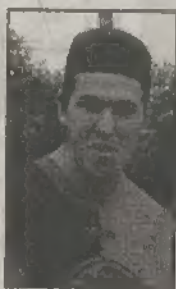
D'Ottavi was not available for comment.

KNEZEVIC BACK ON AUSSIE SOIL

By Daniela Raco

Former Melbourne Knights Ericsson Cup championship winning goalkeeper Vilson Knezevic has returned to our shores after an unhappy stint in Europe.

As the January transfer window approaches Knezevic is looking to once again join the National Soccer League and set himself up as the number one shot stopper in the country.



Vilson Knezevic is looking towards another start at a National League club.

VENABLES GIVES OKON A PAT ON THE BACK

Leeds United boss Terry Venables has given Paul Okon a resounding endorsement on the eve of their English Premier League relegation battle with Sunderland.

The Socceroos captain has overcome a slow start at Leeds to play in the England club's past four games, helping it edge clear of the relegation zone.

And Venables has given Okon a pat on the back for his contribution.

"I am delighted for him," Venables said.

"I'm disappointed he wasn't able to be involved earlier but now he's here

he's had four games and in each game he's got better.

"He takes a lot of care with his passing."

Venables rescued Okon from the soccer scrapheap after the veteran midfielder was released by Watford at the end of last season.

Early injuries restricted his opening to the season, but when given his chance, Okon seized it.

The Venables-Okon partnership first blossomed when the Englishman was coach of the Socceroos before Australia narrowly missed the 1998 World Cup in France.

Viduka and Kewell hold the key

Influential Leeds United figures believe their Australian contingent may hold the key to the club avoiding English Premier League relegation this season.

Assistant coach Eddie Gray has earmarked Mark Viduka and Harry Kewell as the men to save Leeds from the drop, while Socceroos captain Paul Okon's belated return to first-team football has coincided with the club's improved fortunes.

Kewell, who already has eight goals this season, including seven in the Premier League, scored a goal and noticeably lifted his game when Viduka came on the field during Leeds' 1-1 draw with Southampton at the weekend.

And Gray believes the pair would complement each other in an all-Australian forward line.

"Mark holds the ball up so well and takes the pressure off our defenders," Gray said on www.lufc.co.uk.

"He gives Harry that bit more room to play off him and that makes the two of them a very good partnership."

Viduka scored 38 goals in his opening two seasons with Leeds, but has been restricted to only 12 starting appearances this season due to a shoulder injury and a loss of form.

He is still the club's second leading scorer - behind Kewell - with five goals.

However, his mixed season has once again prompted speculation he could be transfer bait once the window opens again next month.

Viduka has been linked with Spanish giants Real Madrid in the past.

However, Italy looks a more likely destination, with Roma and AC Milan also in the picture.

But the 27-year-old from Melbourne, who signed a five-year deal with Leeds in July last year, has said he would be happy to stay and fight for his spot in the team.

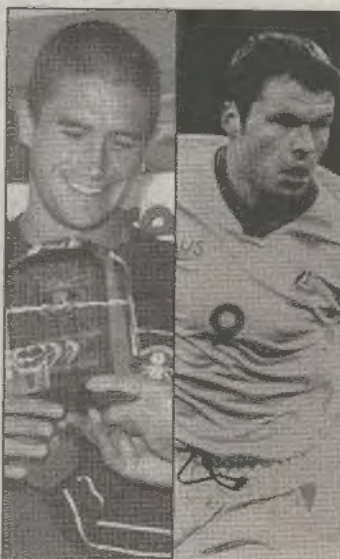
And statistics indicate Viduka has some claims on a starting spot at Leeds.

He is the most efficient striker in the Leeds squad, scoring from 30 per cent of his shots at goal.

Kewell, meanwhile, has scored with just over ten per cent of his shots, although he has taken three times as many as his Socceroo teammate.

"In the last two games, we've got four points and we're happy," Kewell said.

"Hopefully we can go on from this and win the matches against Sunderland and Chelsea."



Aussie's Harry Kewell & Mark Viduka hold the key to Leeds survival in the Premiership.

"We don't think we're in the right place in the table, but quite a few times in the last five minutes we've conceded goals."

"We've just got to stick together and we know we're going to get through this."

"We know what we've got to do and we're going to do it. We created quite a few chances and, on another day, they might have gone in."

Leeds boss Terry Venables has given Okon a resounding endorsement on the eve of their relegation battle with Sunderland.

Okon has overcome a slow start at Leeds to play in the club's past four games, helping it edge clear of the danger zone.

And Venables has given Okon a pat on the back for his contribution.

"I am delighted for him," Venables said.

"I'm disappointed he wasn't able to be involved earlier but now he's here he's had four games and in each game he's got better."

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Venables rescued Okon from the soccer scrapheap after the veteran midfielder was released by Watford at the end of last season.

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KEMP DELIGHTED WITH FIFA DECISION

By Graham Cooke

Federal Sports Minister Rod Kemp is delighted with FIFA's decision to grant the Oceania Confederation a direct place in future World Cups, saying it would provide a fillip for the sport in Australia.

"Of course, with arch rival New Zealand across the Tasman, and improving Pacific neighbours there are no guarantees for Australia," he said.

"But the psychological and financial incentive of

direct entry to the World Cup finals will ensure that everyone involved in Australian soccer will be working together.

"I believe unity of pur-



Federal Sports Minister Rod Kemp.

pose throughout the game will enable our best players to get us there."

Senator Kemp said the decision highlighted the importance of the Crawford Inquiry into the game, saying it will go towards ensuring Soccer Australia is in a position to take full advantage of the FIFA announcement.

"The review is progressing well and I am hopeful we will see its recommendations in the New Year," he said. "Like soccer fans across the nation, I want to see the Socceroos firing in Germany in 2006."

The Year That Was: 2002

By Peter Damalas

The year 2002 will long be remembered as the year that football's gospel reached one of its final frontiers. The FIFA World Cup, held in Korea and Japan, was the first co-hosted event and the first time the tournament had ventured beyond Europe and the Americas.

The extraordinary success of the tournament rivaled USA '94 in terms of organization, local interest, and excitement.

Closer to home, steps have been made to ensure that Oceania does not miss out on FIFA's pledge: "for the good of the game". As Soccer Australia attempts to get its house in order, two key stories have emerged: the bid for the 2014

appeared in various sections of the media. While many argue that the poor standard of soccer in this region does not warrant a berth in the World Cup, others have considered the fact that Oceania is the only confederation that is not represented.

Looking at Australia's attempts to qualify reads a who's who of opponents.

In five campaigns, the Socceroos have played the likes of Scotland, Israel, Canada and Argentina, Iran and Uruguay. The lack of consistency on FIFA's part in settling on a rational qualifying schedule has meant that an under-prepared and sometimes bewildered national team have traveled to opposite ends of the world for 90 minutes of action.

While representatives from the world game's superpowers,

Japan, Australia are not required to build stadia from scratch. Sporting venues such as Telstra Stadium and Aussie Stadium in Sydney, the Melbourne Cricket Ground and Colonial Stadium already meet FIFA standards of seating, with over 40,000 capacity.

The appearance of FIFA President, Mr. Joseph S. Blatter, indicated that the bid would certainly be considered, given the rotation policy installed for the hosting of the World Cup. However, Brazil remain firm favourites to win the hosting rights given the fact that South America has not hosted the event since 1978.

A taskforce headed by Mr. Johnny Warren was also announced at the Opera House, with the aim of improving the sport on the technical and grass roots level.

COLOURFUL BRAZILIANS VICTORIOUS IN THE FAR EAST

The extraordinary success of the first World Cup in Asia almost overshadowed Brazil's triumph in Korea and Japan. The manner in which citizens from both nations took to the world game was perhaps the most pleasing and surpris-

South American qualifying rounds, Luiz Felipe Scolari moulded his team on a tough and uncompromising defence, an industrious midfield, and a creative attacking trio. While a comfortable first round assisted their cause, Brazil were worthy winners and played the most attractive football.

While the success of the United States, Senegal, South Korea and Turkey in reaching the latter stages caught everyone by surprise, two factors contributed to the downfall of the pre-tournament favourites.

France, Argentina and Italy were undone by a combination of fatigue, after long domestic seasons in Europe, and the inability to function properly in a humid climate. The first round match in Oita, on the island of Kyushu, was a case in point as Italy's tired midfield was constantly overrun by the more agile Mexican players.

REAL REVISIT GOLDEN DAYS IN GLASGOW

Spanish giants Real Madrid claimed it's ninth European crown at the venue where they played perhaps their greatest game. The 7-3 triumph over Germany's Eintracht Frankfurt at Glasgow's Hampden Park in 1960 has gone down in Real Madrid folklore.

stranglehold of Spanish, German and English clubs in the last six years.

OLYMPIC TAKE THE GLORY IN THE NSL

The Olympic Sharks claimed their second National Soccer League championship after defeating Perth Glory in the west, thanks to a 'smash and grab' strike from Ante Milicic.

After a twelve year wait in which the Sydney club moved from venue to venue, Olympic found a home at Cronulla's Toyota Park. And with the mid-season acquisition of former Young Socceroo Ante Milicic providing the thrust up-front, the team marched through the elimination series and secured the title.

Perth Glory were by far the best team during the regular season. Winning the minor premiership by a massive thirteen points from

something goes wrong" he said.

Four months later, Soccer Australia has a new administration with Mr. Remo Nogarotto taking over from Ian Knop as Chairman.

The sport has suffered on the domestic front due to a lack of television coverage and sponsorship. The new Board of Commissioners, comprising of Les Avory, Paul Afkos, Dominic Galati, Robert Sestan and Bill Walker, outlined their plans to solve the financial and administrative problems facing soccer.

On the international front, Sepp Blatter was involved in a public row with

African representative Issa Hayatou as the pair contested the FIFA Presidency on the eve of the World Cup. Despite controversies surrounding his financial position, and the sacking of General Secretary, Michel Zen-Ruffinen, Mr. Blatter exhibited strong survival skills in the world of football politics.

While off-season transfer speculation failed to produce the kind of excitement generated in the past, many European clubs continue to spend heavily to secure the services of the world's most talented players.

The biggest activity was saved for the end of the off-season, as Real Madrid, AC Milan and Internazionale made key acquisitions. The main story was the transfer of Ronaldo from Internazionale to Real Madrid. Many supporters and officials of the Italian club felt betrayed after they funded the injured superstar's recovery from knee surgery.

In his place, club president Massimo Moratti secured the signature of Argentine ace, Hernan Crespo. Having just completed his contract at Barcelona, AC Milan swooped to sign Rivaldo on a free transfer.

LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICS AND THE PLAYER MERRY GO ROUND

In August, FIFA President Sepp Blatter was brought to these shores to encourage Australia's bid for the 2014 World Cup. In his statement, Mr.

Blatter commented on Soccer Australia's predicament. "The sport requires stability and continuity in its leadership, and not to change every two years when



Basil Scarsella: OFC President played a big role in cementing Oceania a direct sport in Germany 2006.

World Cup, and the recent decision to grant one country from Oceania direct qualification to the 2006 World Cup in Germany.

This round up begins with the latest news affecting the local game.

DIRECT QUALIFICATION

Australian soccer can start preparing for a realistic crack at the World Cup. After an extraordinary meeting in Madrid on the 17th December, FIFA decided to award the winner of the Oceania section a direct passage to Germany in 2006.

This means that the Socceroos, should they overcome the threat from across the Tasman, will return to the country that hosted Australia's one and only appearance in the world's elite sporting event, in 1974.

The debate as to whether Oceania deserves a spot has

including CONMEBOL's Nestor Benitez have proclaimed FIFA's decision a "charity vote", the 2006 tournament will be the first truly global World Cup.

The achievements of South Korea, Senegal, Mexico and the United States in 2002 assisted FIFA in its decision.

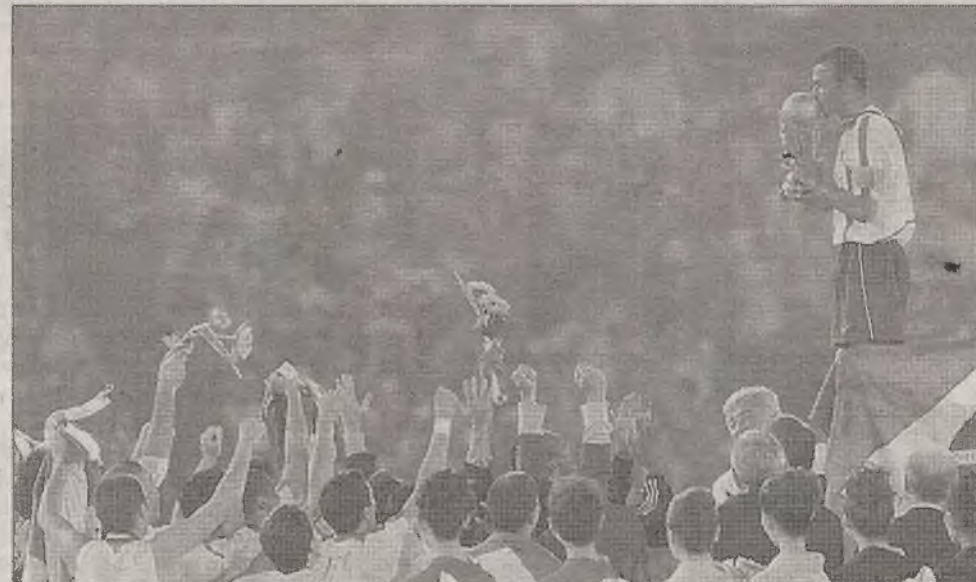
The injection of money into the region will no doubt prove an important incentive.

WORLD CUP BID LAUNCHED ON OPERA HOUSE STEPS

Australia's bold bid to host the 2014 FIFA World Cup began in early August

in Sydney. NSW Premier, Mr. Bob Carr, stated that Australia was "well placed to mount a splendid event", with the co-operation of Victoria and the other states.

Unlike the last hosts, Korea and



Brazilian captain Cafu hoists the World Cup in this year's 2002 finals played in Korea/Japan.

ing aspect of the tournament.

The performance of South Korea on the field provided perhaps the most excitement for local fans, and their fourth placing was fully deserved, despite conspiracy theories from disgruntled federations in Europe. Images of crowded city squares and bars dominated the news, and a sea of red and blue was visible in all the stadia when the hosts played.

Like USA '94, the World Cup has assisted the hosts in terms of establishing a professional soccer league, and the J-League now attracts some of the biggest names in world football. Tourism dollars has also benefited two ailing economies.

On the field, Ronaldo swept away all challenges and won the Golden Boot with 8 goals, the highest tally since 1970. The 'Phenomenon' was supported on the way by veteran superstar Rivaldo, and perhaps the most skilful player in the tournament, Ronaldinho.

After scraping through the



FIFA President Sepp Blatter shown in front of Sydney's Opera House during his visit to Australia this year.



New Soccer Australia chairman Remo Nogarotto was elected as the new man to lead soccer in this country in November this year.



National League Round 15 Reports



South Melbourne Newcastle United

By Alan Clark

South Melbourne preserved its unbeaten home run with a one-one draw in the contest for third place against Newcastle United at Bob Jane Stadium on Sunday evening.

In an unconvincing performance, South were lucky to have fought back into the game with a late own goal after Newcastle took a sixth-minute lead which rarely looked threatened.

Joel Griffiths scored for Newcastle, and Travis Dodd the own-goal that had the teams share the points.

Newcastle United coach Ian Crook had to depart the stadium without facing an after-match media conference, but I spoke with him by phone as he sat in the team-bus on the way to Melbourne Airport for a 9:00pm flight back home.

Crook told me that prior to the game he'd have been happy to

have earned a draw, but felt disappointed that his side's dominance hadn't gained three points from the win instead. But he'd drawn heart from the way in which Newcastle contested the game, and told me he thought it set up his side's chances of gaining a solid Finals berth.

"We were very slow out of the blocks," said a relieved South coach Danny Wright after the game. "Newcastle started the game a lot more determined in their tackles, and deserved to go a goal up. We looked flat to begin with, but I thought we dominated the second-half."

The match had scarcely begun, but even from the first minutes South seemed lethargic and Newcastle adventurous, so Joel Griffiths' sixth minute goal was neither a shock nor a surprise. Griffiths received a ball with his back to goal about 30 metres out. Stephen Eagleton was wide on the left and completely untroubled by defensive attention.



South Melbourne striker Vaughan Coveny shown tussling with Newcastle star Milan Blagojevic.

Griffiths looked in Eagleton's direction, momentarily leaving the South markers he faced undecided whether to close him down or cover Eagleton.

The League's top scorer took full advantage of the indecisiveness and crashed home a shot that found the net low to Eugene Galekovic's right.

Newcastle was playing with a five-man midfield and outnumbering South which had elected to play four in midfield to allow three up front. As a consequence, Newcastle's possession play was more convincing, and South was compelled to scrap for the ball. In the sweltering conditions, this was going to be a tough task.

"(Newcastle) is a very difficult side to play against," said Wright. "They get numbers behind the ball, they are very aggressive, and they

play a very direct style of game. It's hard to play against, when you're playing catch-up soccer."

Ten minutes from the break, Michael Baird almost brought South level on the scoreboard, if not on the balance of play, after some battling work on the right from Peter Buljan. Buljan had won a contest with United's experienced captain Matthew Bingley on the bye-line and sent a hard low ball across the face of the goal. Baird dived to reach it but just failed to win the touch that would surely have steered it into the net.

Both coaches made a half-time substitution each, Newcastle's being Travis Dodd for Robbie Middleby as a consequence of Middleby pulling his hamstring late in the first period; South bringing on Young Soccerroo Massimo Muroccca for Ray Sekulovski.

Dodd was the quicker into action, receiving a ball up the right from a rampaging Esala Masi and taking it to the bye-line before sending in a low hard cross which Joel Griffiths just failed to reach, when the full face of the goal stood before him.

Adam Griffiths had a good

chance to extend the lead midway through the second-half when he rose to head goalwards from a Milan Blagojevic corner, but the ball just cleared the bar.

Newcastle's profligacy came back to haunt them with slightly more than fifteen minutes left for play. South had been awarded a free-kick 25 metres out from goal and to the right-to be taken by Bill Damianos. South brought forward its tall defenders and in the middle of the pack, Damianos found a forest of heads. Any one of a number of players may have got the touch that steered the ball past Daniel Beltrame in the United goal, but it seemed as if it was the unfortunate Dodd who managed to convert into his own net.

By this stage, South seemed to have stirred itself from its earlier torpor and took control of the match. Four minutes from the end, the lanky Vaughan Coveny managed to put the ball over the bar from inside the six-yard box with a diving header following a Damianos corner.

"It was a great chance to have won the game," said a rueful Wright.



Northern Spirit Brisbane Strikers

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3

Brisbane Strikers coach John Kosmina continued his successful streak when the Strikers comfortably disposed of Northern Spirit 3-2 at North Sydney Oval.

A double to midfielder Peter Grierson headed the victory which dropped Northern Spirit to equal bottom with Marconi on the NSL ladder.

John Hutchinson and Brent Fisher grabbed second half goals for the Spirit but the team, which had not played a competition match for a month, ran out of condition at crucial stages.

"We looked a little off the pace and that's the danger of having three weeks' off," Spirit coach Lawrie McKinna said.

"It was slack marking which let

in the goals and although we were more mobile in the second half, Brisbane deserved the win.

The Strikers have now played five successive matches without a loss and, despite the closeness of the score, were always in command.

Brisbane's speedy frontline caused consistent problems in the first half and the 2-0 lead at the break reflected the superiority.

"We were pretty solid all night and our only problems arise when the players tried to be too clever," Brisbane coach Kosmina said.

"They were poor goals that we conceded and the second was disgraceful. The secret of our run of success is discipline and I've warned the players to keep their heads because there's still a long



Northern Spirit's Brent Fisher feels the full force of Strikers keeper Jason Kearon's fist in last week's match at North Sydney Oval that saw Brisbane take all three points with a three-two win.

way to go."

Two shots from close range in the first five minutes set the trend for Brisbane but the opening goals one minute later shocked the Spirit fans.

David Pilic fired a corner which midfielder Grierson deflected and the ball rolled over the line into the far corner of the net.

Brisbane doubled the score eight minutes from half time when Joshua Rose outpaced the defence on the left and his cross was neatly headed past Keeper Paul Henderson by Anthony Roche.

Under-20 international Adam Kwasnik could have levelled with clear chances in the last five minutes only to be denied by great saves from keeper Jason Kearon.

Spirit began the second half brightly and Kwasnik gave the home team hope when his cross

from the right was headed in by John Hutchinson ten minutes into the session.

But five minutes later, Brisbane was on the scoresheet again when the combination of a Pilic corner and Grierson header put the visitors 3-1 in front.

Brisbane continued to attack with Pilic hitting the crossbar and Roche missing from three metres.

Four minutes into extra time, substitute Brent Fisher scored the last goal of the match when he rolled the ball into an open net as the Brisbane defence stood still.

"I'm happy with the way the team played, but our problems started when we lost some discipline and the score was not a true indication off the game," said Kosmina.

*Source - AAP.



Wollongong Wolves Marconi Stallions

2

4

Young Soccerroo Alex Brosque bagged a hat-trick as Marconi ended a goal drought of more than eight hours by hammering Wollongong 4-2 in last Friday night's NSL clash at WIN Stadium.

The Stallions, rooted to the bottom of the table, hadn't scored for more than five games - 484 minutes - before tonight but were gifted a late Christmas present by the woeful Wolves.

After not managing a goal since November 8, Marconi scored twice in four minutes midway through the first half to shut Wollongong out of the contest.

Dino Mennillo and Stuart Young scored goals in the final eight minutes for Wollongong but, at 4-0 down, they were merely a consolation.

Brosque opened the scoring on 24 minutes, tucking away his chance after ex-Wolves striker Tony Perinich fluffed his shot.

Wollongong hardly had time to take in that setback when four minutes later it was 2-0 down through a brilliant goal by Angelo Costanzo.

The defender was left unmarked on the edge of Wollongong's penalty box, and, with the outside of his right foot, rifled a

shot into the top corner.

Wollongong midfielder David Huxley added to the home side's misery by being sent off three minutes from halftime.

Huxley needlessly reacted to a tackle by former teammate Darren McDonald by kicking the Marconi defender on the leg.



Young rising star Alex Brosque was Marconi's hero scoring a hat-trick in the Stallions four-two win over the Wolves at WIN Stadium.



Brisbane's Stuart McLaren (left) shown in aerial battle against Spirit's Young Soccerroo striker Adam Kwasnik.



National League Round 15 Reports



Perth Glory

2



Parramatta Power

1

By Richard Kreider

A superb display of goalkeeping by Parramatta Power's Liam Reddy was not enough to prevent Perth Glory from securing maximum points in what was a hard graft end-to-end encounter at Perth Oval last Sunday.

The 2-1 result, which came from a sizzling three goals in five minutes period midway through the second-half, keeps the defending Premiers in touch with top-side Olympic Sharks while preserving the healthy buffer between them and the third-placed side.

"Football is a game of chances; we missed ours, Glory took theirs and so we were on the receiving end of a loss," said Power coach Nick Theodorakopoulos.

"Performance wise, there was some good patches for our team and some good ball movement - especially in the second-half. The chances might not have been there but we had a lot of good possession that I felt we should have done a bit more with," said Theodorakopoulos, who declined to become involved in any dialogue regarding his goalkeeper, who was sent-off in Round 3 for striking out at Olympic Sharks' Franco Parisi and subsequently told by the Parramatta boss he would never play for the club again. All he would say however, when asked if he was happy with Reddy's performance after his early season misdemeanour was, "yes."

Reddy's performance between the sticks contained a repertoire of reflex and aerobic saves that justifiably earned plenty of admiration from the Perth supporters. On Sunday's showing, it won't take long before overtures of playing overseas football start heading his way.

Meanwhile, Glory coach Mich d'Avray remains convinced that the Power will be in the mix at the end of the preliminary leg of the season. "Parramatta are a good team - a top-six team and they will be there at the end," he said. "It was a really hard fought win against a quality side."

The first-half certainly wasn't one to rave about as is often the case when both sides don't succeed in gaining ascendancy over the other. The opening period did contain substantial chances on both goals, the first arrived after ten minutes when Perth's Jamie Harnwell scuffed a good chance just meters out and Bobby Despotovski tested Reddy in the 16th minute with a strong header off a Brad Hassell centre. A minute



Glory's Young Socceroo star David Tarka grabbed his side's elusive second goal that won the match for Perth two-one against the Power last week.

earlier, Power's Kosta Salapasis responded by firing a strong chance wide of Jason Petkovic's far upright before Peter Zorbas also shot wide nine minutes later.

Parramatta's diminutive dynamo John Buonavoglia had the games first real scor-

ing opportunity on the half-hour when left he found himself with just Petkovic to beat. The former Newcastle United striker was unable to pass the brilliant 'keeper on two occasions after the first strike ricocheted back to him.

With the second period containing an enhanced brand of football, it was the home side that finally broke the deadlock after 72 minutes when a slick one-two between Despotovski and Scott Miller on the edge of the box ended with the latter curling the ball high into the net with his unfavoured right foot.

The euphoria from Glory's supporters had barely subsided when Salapasis pounced onto a dreadful mix-up between Shane Pryce and Harnwell two minutes later. Power's pacey goalscorer didn't waste any time in gathering the loose ball in the centre of the Perth half, before sprinting goalwards and coolly slipping the ball past Petkovic's left hand.

With most of the 9,203 now on the edge of their seats, Glory took the lead once more just three minutes further on when David Tarka ghosted in at the back post to a Despotovski corner and burst the net with a powerful header that notched up his first goal for the club.

"The ball came through the sun but I was still able to follow the flight of the ball and head it home," said the talented defender. Glory has a second home fixture in a row when they play the New Zealand Kingz next Saturday at the new time of 7pm.



Sydney United

1



Football Kingz

0

SYDNEY United ended a barren run with a much-needed victory over the Football Kingz at Edensor Park last Sunday night.

An 11th minute goal from midfielder Anthony Doumanis was enough to settle a scrappy contest and hand United a victory which pushes them up to fifth place on the table.

The result was a huge relief to United coach Branko Culina, who had watched in frustration as his side had slumped to three consecutive defeats, conceding ten goals in the process.

This was a much more committed and determined display from

the home side, epitomised by the contribution of Doumanis, who left the field to a resounding ovation after celebrating his first start to the club with the deciding goal.

It was a typical all action performance from the livewire Doumanis, whose combination with striker Brendon Santalab was a feature of the match.

The other hero for the home side was goalkeeper Vanja Ivesa, whose penalty stop late in the game denied the Kingz a share of the spoils.

Having conceded the penalty with a trip on Kingz' Andy Vlahos, Ivesa redeemed himself by saving the resulting spot kick.



Kingz skipper Chris Jackson shown closely monitored by United goal-scoring hero Anthony Doumanis.

Ivesa then produced another important save in the dying minutes, bravely diving at the feet of Raf de Gregorio when he was through on an open goal.

For United, the win was especially satisfying given the absence of key players Mark Rudan, Commins Menapi and Jon Angelucci.

The Kingz were also without a key play of their own, Chilean import Patricio Almendra out with a knee injury which may also sideline him for next weekends trip to Perth.

Source -AAP.



Olympic Sharks

3



Melbourne Knights

1

By Peter Damalas

In a match marred by difficult playing conditions and multiple bookings, the Olympic Sharks came out on top against the Melbourne Knights 3-1 at Toyota Park in Cronulla.

After taking the lead in the first half, two goals within the space of a minute in the opening moments of the second half produced the most excitement in a dull match.

With the playmaking abilities of Pondejak, Halpin and Porter for the home side, and Vasilevski and Lapsansky for the Knights, an exciting tussle was expected.

However, the poor condition of the playing surface hampered both teams in their attempts to build a steady and flowing passing game.

It was the Melbourne side, led by player/coach Andrew Marth, who dominated in the first half, carving out a number of opportunities that were not capitalised on.

Uruguayan Gustavo Biscayzacu tested Olympic 'keeper Clint Bolton early on with a shot from the edge of the penalty area. Knights champion Adrian Cervinski came closest in the 16th minute, when a cross from the right fell into his path and was knocked wide due to the close attention of defender Jade North two metres away from goal.

The Knights exposed a slack Olympic midfield, and Daniel Vasilevski shot straight at Bolton after an uncharacteristic error from Ante Juric. The Sharks captain was to make up for it when he cleared a close range

volley from Marth over the crossbar. Apart from touches of brilliance from Hiroyuki Ishida, Olympic failed to impress in a first half spent mostly on the sandy patches of the park.

The home team were assisted by referee, Con Diomis, who awarded an indirect free kick inside the Knights penalty area for a breach of the 6-second rule by goalkeeper, Martin John. The decision clearly incensed captain Marth and Lubo Lapsansky, and the Melbourne outfit were duly punished.

The set piece was taken by Ante Mihicic and deflected directly into the path of Ishida, who scored with ease metres out of the goal.

The decision to award the free kick for time delay was undoubtedly the turning point in the match.

On 48 minutes, Olympic Sharks



Both Joel Porter (right) and Tommy Pondejak were on the Sharks score-sheet against the Knights last week.

doubled their advantage courtesy of a brilliant free kick from Tom Pondejak. Nearly 25 metres from goal and in a central position, Pondejak bent the ball a la David Beckham and clipped the inside of the left post as it sailed in. A similar attempt early in the first period was saved by John.

The supporters' joy was short-lived when Solomon Islands striker, Henry Fa'Arado, scored only a minute later with an excellent finish in the Knights first foray of the second half.

The match as an exhibition ceased from this moment as both teams became bogged down in the dry, grass-less pitch.

Few goalmouth incidents eventuated as a number of niggly fouls in midfield were punished by referee Diomis, who procured 8 yellow cards and a red card to young Melbourne centre-back, Antun Kovacic.

Goalscorer Ishida in particular, was pulled down on a number of occasions.

His pace and dribbling on the right flank provided the most entertainment for the 3,346 crowd.

Missing a man at the back, the Knights were dealt a further blow when former player, Joel Porter, rounded the keeper and tapped the ball in with a minute to go, making the score 3-1.

Porter set up Jade North in stoppage time for a low drive which flew wide of the far post.

Gary Phillips' team have won every game at home this season, and have not lost in nine weeks. The victory continues Olympic's incessant charge for the minor premiership.

With the visit of Parramatta Power in the new year, the groundstaff at Toyota Park will be working overtime to prepare the playing field.

The major talking point of this Round 15 fixture, the indirect free kick in the first half, is further testimony to the fact that when a team is on top, refereeing decisions seem to work out in their favour.



United's midfield whizz Gabriel 'Chi Chi' Mendez strutting his stuff against the Kingz last week.

BYE — ADELAIDE CITY FORCE

CENTRAL COAST REVOLUTION

By Ray Sandell

If you look up the word "Revolution" in the dictionary you will find that it is described as meaning "change of direction." That is what is happening on the Central Coast of New South Wales. A revolution. No, it is not a political or local government revolution but a sporting revolution.

For many years the Central Coast Coasties Soccer Club has been one of the minnows of the NSW Soccer Federation's major competitions having had five years in the former Winter Super league and two years in the present Premier League Summer competition.

Whilst their lower grades have performed well and taken out a few trophies the first grade team has always struggled to keep up with the high profile teams from Sydney. Over the past couple of seasons the club spent money they could ill afford, by enticing so called high profile, experienced players to the club from Sydney and Newcastle. With a couple of exceptions, the move was a failure and it was found that the players, many with

large egos, failed to perform.

Meanwhile, the Under 19 team, under the guidance of long serving coach John McLafferty was improving greatly each year, and last season took out the double of the Minor Premiership and Championship.

That's when the revolution set in. Something had to be done! And it was!

McLafferty was appointed first grade coach and with the exception of a couple of older, more experienced players, who had in the past given long and dedicated service to the club, he released the rest of the previous season's first grade squad and decided "youth was the way to go", and he did just that. He retained Peter Preston and Sean Matthews, who had each served the club faithfully for a number of years, and the experienced Pat Bradley, who had moved to the Coast the year before and played mainly in the Under 19 team as an overage player.

These were to be his "old heads". He then promoted five of his winning Under 19 team and lured Aron Binskin, James Monie and Tom Quilty, all young players that had previously been part of the Central Coast Academy and moved to

other clubs, back to the Coasties.

Pre season trials unearthed other young players of outstanding ability and potential, and he finally selected a squad of seventeen, who without the "old heads" had an average age of just under 21.



Next, he organized practice matches, not against anybody, but three of the hardest opponents he could find in Bankstown City, Parramatta Eagles and Leichhardt. Teams full of experienced players and who were pre season favourites to be semi finalists. His side copped a four nil thumping by Bankstown, defeated Parramatta and drew with Leichhardt.

So the season commenced, first match, down to Wollongong to play Rockdale,

another team of well tried and experienced performers. Two late goals saw the Coasties bus trip home a pretty rowdy affair. This win was followed by draws against Canterbury and Bankstown, also with players that had been around a while and many who had played National League.

Back home to play Penrith, running third in the competition, and like the Coasties causing surprises. A late winner by Sean Matthews kept their undefeated record. Last match before the Xmas break saw them visit Fairfield to take on the Bulls, who incidentally had signed three of the previous years Coasties players. The players gave coach McLafferty, and their supporters, a massive Xmas present when they thumped Fairfield 4-1 and in doing so went to the top of the competition table.

As McLafferty said after the Fairfield match "It's great to be on top, but we won't be getting carried away. The boys can have a good Xmas Day but it's back to training on Boxing Day. We have a long way to go and have worked hard to get where we are and I know the players are enjoying the successes, but are sensible

enough to know that the next match could see them lose their undefeated record. We play Belconnen first up after the holidays and then are away to Leichhardt, who are the only other undefeated team and level with us on points. If, after those two matches we are still in the top two or three, I might concede that we are in with a chance of making the playoffs. Until then, and even after that, it's still all hard work, plenty of sweat and of course keeping Lady Luck on our side."

And they say coaches don't think!!

The Central Coast Revolution is still rolling on and like many other, and more famous revolutions, the participants are making their mark felt and winning the battle. The pre season knockers, who were so vocal a couple of months ago, are now very quiet. As the coach said "there's a long way to go" but the odds are shortening that this revolution will be another victory for the workers, and I can tell you all that they are working very, very hard. They can smell victory and are putting up one hell of a fight.

As I read once in my history book at school "Long Live The Revolution!"

TIATTO AVOIDS OPERATION



Danny Tiatto will be out of action for a month with an abdominal muscle injury.

AUSTRALIAN international Danny Tiatto is out of action for a month with an abdominal muscle injury, but will not require a hernia operation as previously feared.

The Manchester City midfielder was forced off at half-time in City's Boxing Day win over Aston Villa.

Tiatto underwent tests yesterday and the specialist decided he did not require surgery.

Manager Kevin Keegan

said last week Tiatto's injury meant he was more likely to try and sign a midfielder when the transfer window opens in January.

That possibility increased further today after playmaker Eyal Berkovic was forced off during the 1-0 win at Fulham with a "tweaked groin".

Keegan said the Israeli would miss the New Year's Day clash at Everton.

"Hopefully it's not long-term," he said.

TARKA TO SAY TA TA TO PERTH

By Richard Kreider

Things have moved at light-speed for Perth Glory defender David Tarka over the last few months.

The tall 19 year-old left-sided stopper has just returned from a successful qualifying finals performance against Fiji for a place at the World Youth Championships which are to be held in

the United Arab Emirates in March next year.

The vice-captain of the young Socceroos found the back of the net in the 11-0 first round whitewash of the Fijians and was on target again last Sunday for his club against Parramatta Power.

Now with 28 club appearances under his belt, it seems this season could be his

last in the N.S.L. before chancing his luck overseas.

"I always set myself goals and I can see this being my last (season with Perth Glory)," said Tarka. "I really put my foot down to get a spot in the (first) eleven for Glory which I have now done and now with the Australian U-20's and the World Cup coming up; hopefully I can remain focussed and something can be arranged."

Certainly his present form suggests that it won't take long before he will be moving to Europe where he says his preferred country is England.



David Tarka: Glory's rising young Socceroo star.

Rangers boss wants Farina talks over internationals

Rangers boss Alex McLeish will seek crunch talks with Australia coach Frank Farina over the availability of Gers duo Craig Moore and Kevin Muscat.

Farina's intention of calling up full-strength squads for all of Australia's international games has set alarm bells ringing at Ibrox.

Referring to last year's cricket score qualifiers against American Samoa and Tonga, Eck said: "I would be disappointed if we lose players for this kind of match,

even if they are official. "But if they're FIFA organised games there's not an awful lot we can do about it.

"Maybe the players can speak to their international manager but it is important that I talk to Frank Farina in advance.

"Craig is one of our most important players, a key part of our squad. You can understand the concern.

"But Farina has to do his job as a national manager and I'll try to have an understanding and communication with him."

Kingz coach excited with new import

Football Kingz coach Ken Dugdale expects to have crack Chilean signing, Mauro Donoso, available by mid-January.

The central defender joined the Kingz earlier this month on a free transfer from Chile's Audax Italiano and has shown enough in training to suggest he can emulate the success of marquee signing Patricio Almendra. Dugdale told the NZ Herald, "He is going to

be an asset judged on what he has shown in the training games.

"He has stamped his authority. You can see his glass. He is tough, hits good balls and has shown out as a natural left-side player which is something we haven't got." Dugdale added: "He is working on his language." The Kingz boss says his players must treat every game from now as a Cup final if they are to stay in the top six.

"There is no room for anything but 100 per cent," said Dugdale. "We are going into every game as though it was a team like Perth on the other side of the halfway line. We have to treat every game like a cup final. "If they don't they will come up short.





NATIONAL SOCCER LEAGUE

After Round 15	TOTAL							PTS	HOME						AWAY					
	P	W	D	L	BYE	F	A		P	W	D	L	F	A	P	W	D	L	F	A
OLYMPIC SHARKS	14	11	2	1	1	33	15	35	7	7	0	0	15	2	7	4	2	1	18	13
PERTH GLORY	14	10	1	3	1	27	13	31	7	6	0	1	15	6	7	4	1	2	12	7
NEWCASTLE UNITED	14	6	3	5	1	24	15	21	7	5	2	0	18	5	7	1	1	5	6	10
SOUTH MELBOURNE	13	6	3	4	2	22	19	21	8	6	2	0	19	8	5	0	1	4	3	11
SYDNEY UNITED	14	5	3	6	1	14	20	18	7	5	1	1	10	6	7	0	2	5	4	14
MELBOURNE KNIGHTS	14	4	5	5	1	25	31	17	8	4	2	2	16	17	6	0	3	3	9	13
FOOTBALL KINGZ	13	4	4	5	1	17	15	16	6	2	3	1	8	6	7	2	1	4	9	9
WOLLONGONG WOLVES	14	4	4	6	1	16	20	16	6	2	3	1	5	5	8	2	1	5	11	15
ADELAIDE CITY FORCE	13	4	3	6	2	21	21	15	6	2	3	1	11	8	7	2	0	5	10	13
PARRAMATTA POWER	13	4	3	6	1	16	17	15	7	3	1	3	10	10	6	1	2	3	6	7
BRISBANE STRIKERS	14	4	3	7	1	24	31	15	7	1	1	5	8	18	7	3	2	2	16	15
MARCONI STALLIONS	13	3	2	8	1	16	20	11	5	1	1	3	5	10	8	2	1	5	8	13
NORTHERN SPIRIT	11	3	2	6	1	16	26	11	6	2	0	4	11	16	5	1	2	2	5	10

PERTH GLORY

(S Miller 72', D Tarka 77')

PARRAMATTA POWER

(K Salapasis 74')

Referee: Ben Williams. Crowd: 9,203. Venue: Perth Oval.

Cautions: A Gumprecht (PG) 44', A Elrich (PP) 71'

Teams: PERTH GLORY: Petkovic, Harnwell, Hassell, Gumprecht, Miller, Despotovski, Junior, Mori (Mrdja 82'), Faria (Horsley 61'), Pryce, Tarka.

Subs Not Used: Mouhouti, Matassa (gk).

PARRAMATTA POWER: Reddy, Ceccoli, Orlic, Beauchamp, O'Sullivan, Maloney (Langdon 72'), Salapasis, Zorbas (Thompson 62'), Buonavoglia (Sobczyk 76'), Renaud, Elrich.

Subs Not Used: Vukovic (gk).

SOUTH MELBOURNE

(T Dodd og 72')

NEWCASTLE UNITED

(J Griffiths 6')

Referee: Eddie Lennie. Crowd: 4,236. Venue: Bob Jane Stadium.

Teams: SOUTH MELBOURNE: Galekovic, Durakovic, Liparoti, Panopoulos, Coveny, Buljan, Sekulovski (Murdocca 46'), Lia (Ibraimi 84'), Baird, Kishorbo, Damianos.

Subs Not Used: Tollos, Anastasiadis (gk).

NEWCASTLE UNITED: Beltrame, Bingley, Wilson (Thomas 80'), J Griffiths, Tsekenis, Baillie, Blagojevic, Masi (Zoricich 89'), A Griffiths, Middleby (Dodd 46'), Eagleton.

Subs Not Used: Willis (gk).

Cautions: Nil

PLAYER OF THE WEEK



ALEX BROSQUE

(Marconi Stallions)

This young 19-year-old striker has talent written all over him but the scary thing is, he only gets better as the games wear on. The current Young Soccerroo star was Australia's best in their eleven-nil romp over Fiji in last week's qualifying match. Brosque bagged a double in that match and also grabbed the plaudits as being the best player on the pitch. The Aussie's qualified for the next year's U20 World Cup in Dubai with Brosque being targeted as Ange Postecoglou's 'player to watch out for'.

After his international duties were over, his club the Marconi Stallions were in dire straits of having one of their worst seasons yet in the NSL sitting at the foot of the table before last Friday's clash against the Wolves.

It took the Stallions 484 minutes (five matches) to score their first goal and it was all thanks to young Brosque.

The Young Soccerroo was in scintillating form notching up a hat trick bringing his goal-scoring tally to six for the year. Raul Blanco's men took the much-needed three points from WIN Stadium that incidentally lifted them off the bottom of the ladder.

Predictions have already been set here at ABSW offices that young Alex will certainly be the next rising Australian set to jet to a European club in the not to distant future.

OLYMPIC SHARKS

(H Ishida 39', T Pondeljak 47', J Porter 90')

MELBOURNE KNIGHTS

(H Fa'Arodo 49')

Referee: Con Diomis. Crowd: 3,346. Venue: Toyota Park.

Teams: OLYMPIC SHARKS: Bolton, Souris, Juric, Pondeljak, Milicic (Parist 87'), Halpin (Srhoj 65'), North, Harris (Durante 71'), Porter, Packer, Ishida.

Subs Not Used: Hughes (gk).

MELBOURNE KNIGHTS: John, Plorkowski, Kovacic, Marth, Vasilevski, Rocco (Ovcin 73'), Erdogan, Jolic, Cervinski, Biscayzacu (Fa'Arodo 46'), Lapsansky.

Subs Not Used: Natsioulas, Hrehoresin (gk).

Cautions: G Souris (OS) 18', T Halpin (OS) 56', A Packer (OS) 35', W Srhoj (OS) 71', A Kovacic (MK) 64', I Erdogan (MK) 86', A Cervinski (MK) 58', L Lapsansky (MK) 88'.

Red Cards: A Kovacic (MK) 81'.

SYDNEY UNITED

(A Doumanis)

FOOTBALL KINGZ

Teams: SYDNEY UNITED: Ivesa, Cacic, Pavic, Bilokapic, Barrett, Jedinak, Mendez, M Santalab, Brain, B Santalab, Doumanis (Watkins 76').

Subs Not Used: Bosnar, Deur, Perash (gk).

FOOTBALL KINGZ: Utting, Taylor (Young 74'), Atkinson, Perry, Jackson, Burton, Uriovic (Campbell 61'), Vlahos, Ngata, deGregorio, Miyazawa.

Subs Not Used: Turner, Bannatyne (gk).

Cautions: G Mendez (SU) 53', B Santalab (SU) 89', A Doumanis (SU) 44', R deGregorio (FK) 26'.

Referee: Peter Green. Crowd: 2,943. Venue: Sydney United Sports Centre.

NORTHERN SPIRIT

(J Hutchinson 55', B Fisher 94')

BRISBANE STRIKERS

(P Grierson 6', 60', A Roche 37')

Referee: Perry Mur. Crowd: 2,245. Venue: North Sydney Oval.

Teams: NORTHERN SPIRIT: Henderson, Watts, Spencer, Tobin, McDermott (Bell 20'), Ferguson, Kwasnik, Hutchinson (Osman 85'), Tomasevic, Wilkinson, Richter (Fisher 51').

Subs Not Used: Acevski (gk).

BRISBANE STRIKERS: Kearton, Stefanutto, McKain, McLaren, Grierson, Rech (McKay 63'), Webber, Laybutt, Pilic, Rose (Alagich 68'), Roche.

Subs Not Used: Carbone, Baldock (gk).

Cautions: Nil

WOLLONGONG WOLVES

(S Young 85', D Mennillo 82')

MARCONI STALLIONS

(A Brosque 21', 47', 68', A Costanzo 28')

Referee: Mark Shield. Crowd: 3,152. Venue: WIN Stadium.

Teams: WOLLONGONG WOLVES: Crews, Stanton, Cervinski, Castro (Babic 46'), Lyons, Young, Sekulovski, Heffernan, Huxley, Aliffi (Wells 46'), Mennillo.

Subs Not Used: Timpano, Whalan.

MARCONI STALLIONS: Turnbull, Gibson, Webb, Costanzo, Longo, Perinich (Fitzsimmons 80'), McDonald, Brosque, Care, Cotte (Sekulic 92'), Anabalon (Thwaite 59').

Subs Not Used: Alogdellis (gk).

Cautions: D Heffernan (WW) 67', D Mennillo (WW) 77', P Cotte (MS) 43'.

Red Cards: D Huxley (WW) 41'.

LEADING GOALSCORERS

Name	Club	Total
MORI Damian	Perth Glory	12
GRIFFITHS Joel	Newcastle United	11
PELIKAN Anthony	Melbourne Knights	9
YOUNG Stuart	Wollongong Wolves	9
RECH Fernando	Brisbane Strikers	7
NGATA Heremaia	Football Kingz	6
ALMENDRA Patricio	Football Kingz	6
HASSELL Bradley	Perth Glory	6
BROSQUE Alex	Marconi Stallions	6
ROCHE Anthony	Brisbane Strikers	6

BYE - ADELAIDE CITY FORCE

From The Dressing Sheds

-How odd it was to see a number of high profile officials come out and state that Oceania gaining direct entry was not the way to go and that a tougher scenario should have been organized.

All this time Oceania was fighting for its rite to cement a spot in a World Cup and now that

If the game of soccer is to survive in this wonderful country of ours, this step of gaining direct qualification will surely help this purpose out.

Australia hasn't necessarily qualified yet, even though a number of people presume that it's already over. Frank

almost every country across the globe.

-It seems as though the festive season brought out a number of National League stars to the town last week with a number of players attending various nightspots around Sydney.

ABSW's roving eye caught a few Power and Olympic players alongside a Fairfield Bulls star enjoying their night out on both Christmas Eve and Boxing Day at Sydney's Cockle Bay Wharf.

'The Docks' as it was called featured not only players from the Power and Bulls, but former Olympic Sharks legend Chris Kalantzis was also present looking better than ever.

While on Boxing Day at Darling Harbour's 'Watershed', two Olympic players had made the trip for a good night but as true professionals left rather early as the lads had a 9am start the next morning.

It wasn't only the players that showed up that night but some officials also made the trek as well.

Player Agent Leo Karis, who looks after the likes of Mark Bosnich and Paul Okon, was also spotted in the Cockle Bay area with some guests.

The festive season sure brings out the crowds - ABSW's roving eye will have more sightings in next weeks 'dressing sheds'.

-One of Australia's most talented youngsters touched 'down under' last week heralding a vacation that was well worth it.

Current Excelsior striker Brett Holman, on loan from Dutch giants Feyenoord slipped into Sydney quietly last week hoping to catch up with his family and friends.

Amidst all the controversy that had circled the former Power player in regards to not representing his country for the recent U20 international matches, young Holman has his sights firmly set on establishing a successful European career and like ABSW stated in previous editions, a few players could get a surprise call-

up for the Olympic Squad in coming months.

ABSW will be doing an exclusive interview on Holman in next week's edition on his desire to still don the green and gold jersey.

-John Kosmina's Brisbane Strikers have certainly made in-roads to a bad start to the year after their three-two win over the Spirit last week set the side to a five-match unbeaten run.



Kosmina's boys are roaring up the ladder through their five match unbeaten run.

Having been given no chance at the start of the season by soccer pundits across Australia, 'Kossie' could spurn an upset with his chargers as the never say die attitude of the Queenslanders could be enough to land them a top six spot this year.

-The Australian National League boosts probably one of the best records of keeping coaches at clubs during the NSL season, especially comparing us to countries like Greece, Italy, England and Spain who go through coaches like dirty underwear.

It took 13 rounds for



Even though it did not eventuate, Force President Bob D'Ottavi could have easily been the next coach of the Adelaide City Force again

this seasons first coaching casualty and alas the Adelaide City Force lost its coach in Charley Villani.

The big 'V' decided to part company with Force after stating that "the board was actively participating in my decisions in a manner which I didn't believe was in the best interests of the team".

A man that possess more trades than anyone else in the game in Australia, City President Bob D'Ottavi took over the side once again against the Knights two weeks ago after doing the same last year.

In recent developments Matic has returned back to his old hunting ground and will sit out as Force's caretaker coach for the remainder of the season.

The Force had a great start to the season, and at one stage looked like a contender for second spot behind the Sharks, however poor on-field results have led to the team's downfall with four losses in a row!

The bye this week made matters worse, however with Matic appointed as coach of the club till the end of the NSL season, it could spark a revival that has been long needed in the 'City of Churches'.

-Congratulations must

go out to the Young Socceroos for their convincing displays over minnows Fiji last week.

Postecoglou's young and talented squad destroyed Fiji eleven-nil in Melbourne while a more laid-back approach was evident in Fiji winning only four-nil.

gun striker with nine goals for the season celebrated his 100th game for the club last week against the Stallions while the Sydney United duo of Paul Bilokapic (200 games) and 'Chi Chi' Mendez (150) also reached their personal achievements of matches



in the NSL against the Football Kingz last Sunday afternoon.

The side currently boosts a number of stars that will surely be future Socceroos in the near future and those lucky spectators that witnessed the game in Melbourne will surely remember various names from the squad.



Paul Bilokapic chalked up his 200th NSL game last week.

Abroad players such as keeper Nathan Coe (Inter Milan), Carl Valeri (Inter Milan), Spase Dilevski (PSV Eindhoven), Scott McDonald (Southampton) and locals Alex Brosque (Marconi Stallions), Michael Baird (South Melbourne), Matthew McKay (Brisbane Strikers) and 'big' David Tarka (Perth Glory) are just some of the many outstanding stars Australia boosts at Under 20 level.

Postecoglou could make a few changes to his squad for next years World Cup in Dubai however the nucleus of the squad will not change.

Can't wait to see the new U17's in action, more talent has apparently been reported from this squad as well.

Just goes to show how good we really are in developing youngsters as world-class stars.

-A pat on the back must go out to players Stuart Young, Paul Bilokapic and Gabriel Mendez after the trio celebrated a milestone in their careers in the NSL. Young, Wollongong's

BAD BOY OF THE WEEK



David Huxley (Wollongong Wolves)

Wollongong's hard working midfielder David Huxley was given this week's ABSW 'bad boy' of the week for his un-called for retaliation on Stallions player Darren McDonald during last week's fixture at WIN Stadium.

The Wolves needed a win to stay in touch with the top six pack while the Stallions were searching for at least a point to get them away from bottom spot.

It was a night Ron Corry's men would like to forget losing four-two to Marconi and having had one player sent off (David Huxley) in the 41st minute, did not help the Wolves cause.

'Hux' was furious over a tackle from former team-mate Darren McDonald just before the half-time break and reacted non accordingly by kicking the Marconi player thus giving referee Mark Shield no choice but to send the Wollongong star off the pitch.

opportunity has come about, the confederation should take it with both hands.

It's been no secret that a number of journalists have also come out and said that Oceania gained a back door passage towards cementing a spot for the 2006 World Cup and that it was the 'un-Australian' way to do so.

Farina's boys are sitting in the box seat however, of playing in Germany come 2006.

One thing's for sure, if the Socceroos make the golden trek towards Germany in 2006, sports such as Rugby League, Union, Cricket etc will be taking a back seat and could see themselves lose out to the only real world game played in

Round 17 Fixtures

10-1-03

Marconi Stallions - Melbourne Knights
Football Kingz - Wollongong Wolves
Newcastle United - Perth Glory

11-1-03

Brisbane Strikers - Olympic Sharks
Parramatta Power - Adelaide City Force

12-1-03

South Melbourne - Northern Spirit

Bye - Sydney United

Round 16

3-1-03

Adelaide City Force - Marconi Stallions
Northern Spirit - Newcastle United
Wollongong Wolves - Brisbane Strikers

4-1-03

Perth Glory - Football Kingz

5-1-03

Sydney United - South Melbourne
Olympic Sharks - Parramatta Power

Bye - Melbourne Knights

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO READERS

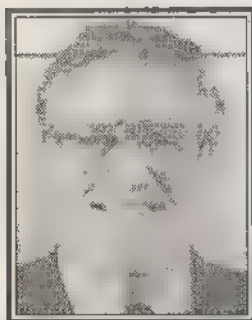


ABSW will again go through a 24-page format for next week's edition, we apologise for any inconvenience caused but rest assured the 'old' 32-page spread will be back soon.

Reasons for the reduced format has been Europe's winter break and various journalists have taken leave for a while.

Stay tuned for more updates in forthcoming ABSW editions.

OFF THE CROSSBAR



By Allan Crisp

FORCE STILL CALLS HINDMARSH HOME

Lovers of Hindmarsh Stadium who regard it as the best ground in Australia will be thrilled by the decision of Adelaide City Force to continue to play their home NSL games at that facility for the remainder of the 2002-2003 season.

Force president Bob D'Ottavi told ABSW last Friday night that a verbal agreement also had been reached with the SA Government to extend the rental for the next two seasons.

However, this was denied by the Hindmarsh Stadium management on Saturday morning, bringing this response from D'Ottavi "At this time of year when people are in holiday mood, things get

confused, but we will clarify the matter."

City had been considering Norwood Oval as an alternative venue, but a generous rate reduction offer from the State Government brought about the change of heart.

In keeping with the festive season, Sports Minister Michael Wright, after consultation with Soccer Australia, slashed the hiring fee of the stadium by almost half.

The agreement involves slicing the hire fee to \$4,500 per home game plus GST and restricting the spectator avail-



Adelaide City president Bob D'Ottavi has come to an agreement that will keep Adelaide City at Hindmarsh Stadium for the remainder of the season.

ability to only the western grandstand that accommodates 5,500 fans.

Mr Wright described the offer as an "element of com-

promise as we celebrate Christmas, that is in the best interests of soccer."

He also said that Soccer Australia had told him that the deal would provide a facility cheaper than any other stadium around Australia.

"This is a once in the world offer," he said. "What this shows is an element of compromise by the Government, making sure that the taxpayer is in no way financially disadvantaged, making sure that the spectator is not financially disadvantaged but, at the end of the day, it is Adelaide City Forces business."

The Hindmarsh contract is similar to that accepted by Adelaide Galaxy last season when they played their home Premier League games at the SASF headquarters on Friday nights.

D'Ottavi was understandably pleased when the deal was eventually finalised.

"It took a little longer than expected because we had to tie up the loose ends of the deal we were negotiating with the Norwood people," D'Ottavi said.

"We expect to play in the finals and if we do, we would expect to attract more fans. In that event, we would be able to open the other areas of the stadium to accommodate the larger crowds."

In that event, the added security costs would mean

added expense, but that should be compensated by the increased ticket sales.

BUGSY BACK TO COACH SA

There were many people throughout South Australia who were delighted to hear the news last week that former Australian international defender Buggy Nyskohus has been appointed SA State coach for season 2003.

The SASF began a frantic search for a new State coach after Mike Barnett accepted the key job at MetroStars.

Barnett was ineligible to continue because the SASF prefers its State coaches to be unattached to Premier or State League clubs.

Nyskohus was probably not the first man to be considered for the prized position because he has been out of the game since his last appointment in 1997-98 when he coached the State senior side.

But, all that know and admire Buggy Nyskohus hold him in high esteem as a player and a coach.

His dedication and devotion to soccer is illustrated by the fact he holds the State team record as a player with 66 games to his credit for SA and five cake icing appearances for Australia.

After completing the Fasta Pasta Centenary Interstate Series undefeated, Nyskohus

sees little value in making changes to the celebrated class of 2002.

"It was a great achievement to perform as they did last season, so we will look first at those players," Nyskohus said.

SASF vice chairman, Arthur DiFede, whose portfolio includes the senior State team, said Nyskohus had been given a list of last seasons SA squad to examine.

"At this stage, it looks as though our first assignment will be in early February against visiting Japanese team Verdy Tokyo," DiFede said.

"There should be at least one other J League team coming and possibly more, but at Christmas time, Verdy was the only team to confirm its visit."

With Denis Harlow stepping aside from the State team manager post because of his busy schedule of completing his Centenary of SA Soccer book and the 2003 Official Year Book the SA managerial position has been filled by former player Alan Horsfall.

STATE HEROES

There were 29 heroes who wore the State colours with pride during South Australia's triumphant Centenary Interstate Series.

Five of the group played all seven games during the high pressure competition with captain Michael Brooks ending the competition with a career

total of 19 interstate matches, one short of the 20 games needed to earn SASF Player Life membership.

Joining Brooks on the ever-present seven game list were,



Michael Brooks: Sitting on 19 interstate matches one short of the 20 games needed to earn SASF Player Life membership.

Frank Sergi, George Tsonis, Aaron Westervelt and Mark Yates

The burning question is will Brooks reach his 20 game milestone in 2003? The doubt arises because "Brooksie" transferred from the Blue Eagles to Para Hills where he has taken on the player-coach role.

Brooks has said he would take the field if required for the Knights, possibly as sweeper, not as central striker, the position he has excelled in during his record breaking goal scoring career.

Also closing in on the 20-game milestone are Rick Piotrowski and Dante Menechella, both on the 18-match mark, while Corey Artone and Michael Pirone have accumulated 15 each and Aaron Westervelt 14.

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ACT Academy2
Newcastle United0

By Graham Cooke

Newcastle United coach David Lowe described it as "the kind of game that costs you places in the finals", and from the point of view of the traveling Northern NSW team, the 2-0 loss to the ACT Academy of Sport in Canberra was as unwelcome as it was unexpected.

However, that is not to take away from Mike Milovanovic's team, which is knitting together well and playing with confidence against mainly older opposition in the National Youth League.

There is still a persistent problem, as outlined by assistant coach Alan Reis afterwards. "We are slow starters, and we have got to work on that," he said. "We saw it today, and we saw it a couple of weeks ago against Canberra Deakin when the game was all over with 20 minutes gone and they slammed us."

That didn't happen on Friday night, largely due to the failure of Newcastle to take some early opportunities and, especially later in the game when the visitors threw everything into a series of desperate cavalry charges, to the excellent goalkeeping of 15-year-old Josh Mears.

The youngster, who gave up competitive swimming for football, appears to have all the natural attributes - height, agility, lightning fast reactions, and is maturing tactically under the eye of goalkeeper coach Paul Jones.

After surviving early pressure the Academy took the lead four minutes before half time, a well-directed header from David Reis who had come up from defence to add telling weight to a corner kick.

The second, less than 10 minutes after the interval, was scored by Robbie Cattanaich who flicked a cheeky little shot past Mitchell O'Brien after a long throw had put Newcastle under pressure.

In the final stages Mat Wilkinson, Josh Mitchell and Clayton Poole all had scoring opportunities for Newcastle, only to find Mears in outstanding form.

CANBERRA DEAKIN: Joshua Mears, Matt Menser, David Reis, Steve Masters (Michael Hunt 73), David Kemp, Adam Spaleta, John O'Brien, Robbie Cattanaich (Matt Grayson 66), Steve Hayes, Andrew Barisic, Ben Agostino (Mark Genz 51).

NEWCASTLE UNITED: Mitchell O'Brien, Lee Davelaar, Peter McPherson, Jason Cowburn (Mitchell Wallace 46), Daniel Rufo, Clayton Poole, Josh Mitchell, Nigel Boogard, Peter Falla (Gocha Once 66), Mat Wilkinson, Daniel Ciarrochi.

Referee: Les O'Donoghue.

Crowd: 103

NATIONAL YOUTH LEAGUE 2002-2003 NORTHERN DIVISION - ROUND 15

FRIDAY 27 DECEMBER 2002

ACTAS 2 Newcastle United Youth 0
(Reis 41', Cattanaich 53')

Northern Spirit Youth 2 QAS 0
(Foti 23', Burgess 63')

Wollongong Wolves Youth 3 Marconi Stallions Youth 3
(Dellis 31' 38' pen, Majurovski 89') (Talevska 10' 79', Trposki 33')

SUNDAY 29 DECEMBER 2002

Sydney United Youth 1 Canberra Deakin 1
(Urizar 36') (Pideski 75')

Marconi Mustangs 1 Parramatta Power Youth 3
(Turrisi 59') (P. Cardozo 3', Gavaghan 74', R. Cardozo 82')

NATIONAL YOUTH LEAGUE 2002-2003

NORTHERN DIVISION

LEAGUE LADDER - ROUND 15

	P	W	D	B	L	F	A	Pts
Parramatta Power Youth	13	8	3	2	2	34	17	27
Canberra Deakin	14	6	-4	2	4	36	21	22
AIS	10	6	3	3	1	16	7	21
Wollongong Wolves Youth	12	5	4	2	3	25	17	19
Northern Spirit Youth	12	5	-4	2	3	12	8	19
Sydney United Youth	12	5	2	2	5	27	18	17
Newcastle United Youth	13	4	5	2	4	19	18	17
ACTAS	11	5	1	3	5	18	21	16
Olympic Sharks Youth	12	3	5	2	4	13	13	14
QAS	13	4	2	2	7	17	31	14
Marconi Stallions Youth	13	3	4	2	6	15	31	13
Marconi Mustangs	13	0	3	2	10	5	35	3

SURNAME

Spaleta
Gavaghan
Pideski
De Silva
Glavas
Smits
Watkins

FIRST NAME

Michael
Peter
Carl
Timothy
Luka
Tim
Daniel

CLUB

Canberra Deakin
Parramatta Power Youth
Canberra Deakin
QAS
Sydney United Youth
QAS
Sydney United Youth

GOALS

12
8
8
7
7
7
7

ROUND 16 FIXTURES

NORTHERN DIVISION

FRIDAY 3 JANUARY 2003

Wollongong Wolves Youth Vs QAS
Time: 5.00 pm
Venue: WIN Stadium

SUNDAY 5 JANUARY 2003
Sydney United Youth Vs ACTAS
Time: 4.00 pm
Venue: Sydney United Sports Centre

Olympic Sharks Youth Vs Parramatta Power Youth
Time: 4.00 pm
Venue: Toyota Park

Marconi Mustangs Vs Canberra Deakin
Time: 5.00 pm
Venue: Marconi Stadium

Northern Spirit Youth Vs Newcastle United Youth
Time: 5.00 pm
Venue: Cromer Park

BYE - AIS

BYE - Marconi Stallions Youth

The 'Real' Pablo Cardozo Unplugged



By Daniela Raco

PABLO CARDOZO has spent the last 13 years in the limelight as one of this country's leading strikers. A relentless ability to answer his critics with goals has been a recurring theme throughout Cardozo's roller-coaster career.

He has scaled the heights of the domestic game, and has earned a reputation as one of the most sought-after marksmen in the National Soccer League, and deservedly so.

He has scored some sensational goals, but more importantly, netting them on a regular basis.

Pablo is the complete player, with still unfulfilled potential. Perhaps if the "powers that be" scoured for talent, the potent striker would be earning his keep on the world stage.

As I whip into Sydney to melt in the sun (I'm from Melbourne... anywhere else and it's hot!), the man with the swarthy good looks talks to ABSW about holiday destinations (he gives us a travel guide), bad habits, and noisy neighbours!

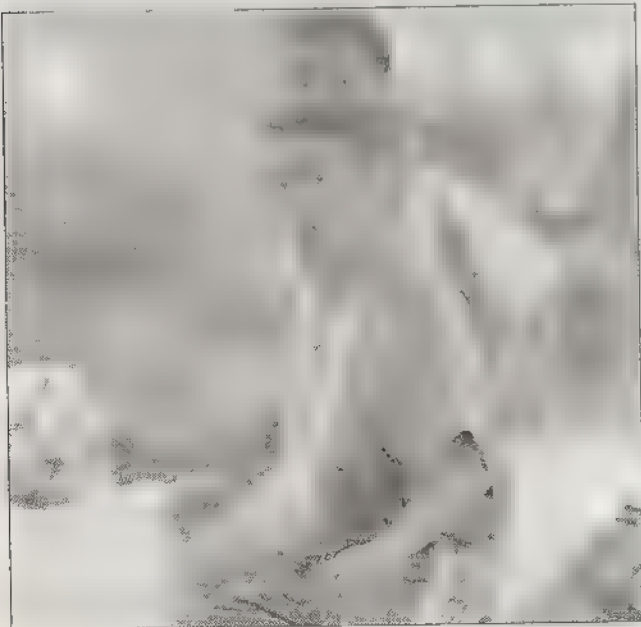
PLAYER'S POSITION – Striker.

NSL CLUB – Parramatta Power.

DR: How would you describe yourself as a player?

Still learning.

DR: From what age have you been playing this great game?



Representing the Green & Gold was one of Pablo's greatest achievements. ●

For fun, since I was four. Competitively since eleven with the Spanish Club of NSW.

DR: The path to a championship is a long journey. Will the squad taste Championship glory this season?

Right now, "no". But we have the whole second round and who knows...stranger things have happened.

DR: What is your most memorable soccer moment?

There's too many. But definitely one that stands out is getting to train with the

getting stuck in the gym is pretty boring. Waking up knowing that I can play is the passion that I have.

DR: Like any good player, as your name and reputation grows as being one of the leagues most potent centre-forwards, it becomes increasingly more difficult to score because of the tighter marking. Do you agree?

Yes and no. Depends who you're playing against. Some coaches pay more attention. Others just leave you and make it easier. It gets a bit difficult sometimes, but it doesn't really



Parramatta Power's goal machine Pablo Cardozo.

Argentinean national side in 1993 before they played Australia to qualify for the World Cup with Maradona, Redondo and all the big stars. I did that three times.

DR: Can you describe your passion for playing?

I just love playing. Since I've been injured for the past few weeks I haven't been able to play or train properly. Just

worry me. The opposition is always good regardless.

DR: Are the 111 goals in 12 years in the National League not enough to convince national coach Frank Farina of your talent?

My style of play doesn't do it for me. I'm not your typical number "9"; I'm more of a creative, technical type of Striker. Most others are big, solid, and direct. I'm more of a number "10", which I don't think our National Team plays with.

DR: Is another move overseas the only way to draw Frank Farina's attention in pushing for Socceroo selection?

I don't really look at it. I think it's hard regardless, at my age especially. They'll be looking more at guys in the mid-twenties or early-twenties where they'll be definitely fit and still playing in three years time when we qualify.

DR: Is this something that motivates you – the chance to prove to selectors that you can hold your own at an elite level?

Like you said, after 100plus goals I don't really have much to prove. I think the likes of Damian Mori, myself, and two or three other guys that are locally based don't really have much to prove.

DR: Were you surprised by the vocal contingent of Olympic Sharks supporters who made it clear that you were "persona non grata" during a recent game at your old ground?

No, I'd more upset if they didn't say anything because that would mean that they weren't afraid or they didn't respect what I did for them.

Not that I'm trying to compare myself to somebody, but the other day I was watching Figo return to Barcelona and the same thing was said about him.

If the fans didn't respect him and love him so much while he was there they probably wouldn't care that he came back.

I think that's what hurts them more – the fact that I left –, but I'm sure if tomorrow I was to walk back into their change room and walk out with their strip I'm sure the abuse would stop and the open arms would be there again.

But to be fair to them, they're entitled to their voice. It's only really a handful of guys being stupid. But a lot of the abuse that is said is wrong. It's not at me...it's more towards my family. If they want to boo or yell abuse at me, that's fine.

When it's about your family or your mum, that's not right. It's not fair on them. But, at the end of the day, you only hear it for a couple of minutes, the rest of the time you're concentrating and don't really hear the crowd.

DR: Rate your own soccer skills out of 10.

There is no such thing as a perfect "10". You can always get better. If I was a perfect "10" I'd probably be playing with Real Madrid rather than with the National Soccer League in Australia.

There are not many players here that are more than a "7" anyway.

DR: One of the hardest things that professional athletes have to cope with is long-term injury. You had your worst fears realized with an MRI scan confirming that you would be out of the game for up to six weeks. How is the rehabilitation coming along?

It's a lot better than the doctors expected, but I'm still not 100%. It may be another week or two before I'm back.



Cardozo spent some wonderful years and scored a number of goals for the Olympic Sharks.

DR: When an injured athlete is out of action, he often becomes a coach from the sideline. Pablo how is the team doing on the park?

Three losses in a row...not very good at the moment. But I haven't seen two of the games. Two have been away interstate. But from what I'm told, they missed a lot of chances and maybe should have won.

But having said that, we lost at home 4-1 to Newcastle and for a team that's aspiring to be in the Top 6, losing 4-1 to a team that isn't in the Top 2 isn't good.

DR: And off the park?

It's funny because we haven't really been out as a team. I've been here maybe

two or three months already. It's not much of a socializing team; it's more of do-your-own-thing.

I think it's because a lot of the boys live scattered and a number of them are married and that holds it against us as well.

DR: Is it disappointing to see crowd number dwindling at League clubs, including Power?

It's disappointing, but it's not a surprise. You have to really ask the fans what they think.

I remember when I was at Olympic a couple of years back, we were cruising... four or five points ahead on the table, playing some beautiful soccer, yet still attracting only 4-6 thousand, when maybe we



'Pabz' had the pleasure of training with soccer legend Maradona whilst Argentina where in Australia in '93.

The 'Real' Pablo Cardozo (continued)

should have had 8-10 thousand minimum.

DR: What makes soccer such a popular sport around the world?

Because they don't have as much variety as we do. Look at America and Australia. America has baseball, gridiron, basketball, and all these other sports before soccer, and so does Australia.

We have cricket, rugby league, rugby union and AFL. They are all much along the same lines - all physically minded sports. The technical ability isn't there. Fans, Australian and American, seem to prefer that.

Whereas if you put an AFL game in front of a bunch of AC Milan supporters or Real Madrid supporters... they'll go "What's this?"

DR: Is the talent drain harming the local game?

Definitely. When your so-called better players go overseas you expect it. It's no surprise. We are not Argentina or Brazil, where there's a freak born on every corner.

In a country like ours where we have much less naturally talented soccer players, it's obviously going to harm our game.

DR: What will it take for

DR: What league do you rate as the world's best?

The Spanish League.

DR: If you could play for any team in the world, which one would it be?

Real Madrid, because they are truly the greatest club in history. That's not just because I'm a fan.

I went on holidays and visited the Barcelona ground and Real Madrid ground and you walk into that trophy room and it's unbelievable.

Words can't describe how freaky it is. You just walk into room-after-room full of trophies, and achievements, and victories. It is the biggest club in the world.

DR: Is there a soccer player that you model your game on?

No. I just look at everyone that is above us all. There are so many freaks out there, the Zidane's, Ronaldo's, Batistuta's, plus the players that were around in the 1980's and 1990's. You just try to emulate them all. But that's why they're the freaks.

DR: What are the qualities of a good coach?

A coach is someone that manages his players quite easily.



The famous singer has been likened to Pablo.

players to pick, and when to play them. Using the best system and style for the players he has, rather than maybe sticking to one system and persisting with it if it's not working.

DR: In one word describe Coach Nick Theodorakopoulos.

The man? Ambitious.
The coach? Ambitious.

DR: Who is the funniest character in the game today?

There's too many. Every team has their own clown that will make you laugh. There is always one or two that will stand up and take the piss out of someone. I'm sure if you ask the rest of my teammates, they'll probably say me.

DR: What do you do in your "downtime"?

In the off-season I go away on holidays. During the season, I don't have too much downtime. This I probably the first time I've had it. It's all new to me. I'm not used to it, and I don't like it!

DR: Do you know of any pre-match mishaps (missing players, two left boots, etc)?

A team we played against at our home ground left their jerseys at the hotel and had to go back and get them.

DR: Any early predictions for season 2002-2003?

In no particular order these teams will make the Top 6.

- Olympic Sharks
- Perth Glory
- Newcastle
- Sydney United
- South Melbourne
- and of course "Parramatta Power"

DR: Who is the last person you would like to be stuck in an elevator with?

Anyone with bad body odour.

DR: If you uncorked a genie in a bottle, what would you wish for?

That I didn't uncork it. No such thing as luck.

DR: If you could travel back in time, where would you go?

I'd like to relive my last holiday all over again.

DR: If you could choose any actor to play you in a movie, who would it be?

George Clooney, except he couldn't kick a ball if he tried!

DR: Who would you trade places with for a day?

No-one. I love my spot. It's nice and safe.

DR: What is the biggest misconception about sportsmen?

That we're big-headed, snobs, arrogant, and rude. People judge us without really getting to know us.

DR: If you could have any supernatural power, what would it be?

To understand what actually goes through a woman's mind.

DR: What animal (or thing) best describes your personality?

Honey...because I'm nice and smooth.

DR: Best hangover cure?

Don't know...never had a hangover!

DR: Favourite holiday destination?

- South Beach Miami
- Florence
- Monaco
- Switzerland
- San Sebastian

DR: What gourmet cuisines can you whip up in the kitchen?

I can cook a mean breakfast.

DR: Worst haircut in the league?

Pedrag Bojic

DR: Which famous person have you been told you look like?

Elvis, Craig Wing, and George Clooney.

DR: What is the best ingredient for a good night out?

Good people, good music, and it doesn't matter where it is.

DR: Complete this sentence "Love is...."

...hard to find, and harder to keep.

DR: What is your biggest fear?

Getting stung by a bee.

DR: What ring tone do you have on your mobile?

"What is Love?"

DR: If you were a bird, whose head would you poo on and why?

Probably someone that has just walked out of the hairdressers and had their hair done in a really rich suburb - to make them care less about their appearance.

DR: What is the most expensive item of clothing you own?

I've got two or three pairs of sunglasses over \$200 each.

DR: Do you have any bad habits?

I bite my finger nails.

DR: Are you the first or last to leave the change rooms after a game?

Usually last. I don't rush to get out. I don't run straight to the showers. I'll have my drink and eat whatever food they've got for us. Basically relax. I've just been running around for 90 minutes, so I think I can take my time. Whereas I think if you rush and you're the first one out, then you probably haven't done enough running on the pitch.

DR: What gets you up in the mornings?

Usually it's my neighbours who are bloody loud.

DR: What is the first thing you do when you arrive home?

Open the front door.

DR: How would you spend your last \$50?

Play the \$9 million dollar Powerball and win it!



Younger brother Ritchie is hoping to emulate his brother's success on the domestic and international scene.

Australia to be World Soccer Champions?

An entirely new world! I think to qualify would be a huge step. We have to be realistic. Look at Senegal. Do you think Australia can play that well? It's difficult to say.

You have to be lucky enough to get a good group. As much as I would love for it to happen, it probably won't happen in our lifetime.

NEXT WEEK: Daniela Raco interviews Northern Spirit's Vuko Tomasevic.



Parramatta Power's lethal striker.



ENGLISH



An English Odyssey

By Stuart Jones

A big week of football in the UK is always on around Christmas. The first part of this occurs on boxing day and what a present for Arsenal. A 2-1 win coupled with all their rivals losing points put them further clear of the field. The biggest shock came at Middlesbrough where Steve McClaren saw his new team defeated his old side (Manchester United) 3-1. At the bottom West Ham failed to win at home again whilst Bolton scored a 4-3 win over Newcastle to pull them out of the bottom three. Leeds managed a win to help them pull away from the bottom further.

Bad news for Gunners fans with back up goal keeper Ram Shaaban breaking his leg on Christmas Eve. Stuart Taylor is currently out with a broken thumb so the Gunners may well have to dive into the transfer market come January.

In other news on the custodian front Everton have brought in Espen Baardsen on loan after both Steve Simonsen and Paul Gerrard were injured. Ex Spurs keeper Baardsen (okay not something you would want on your resume, but look at it this way - as a Spurs keeper he would have got a lot of practice between the sticks) will be out to prove himself after being released by Watford.

Blackburn have also been rocked by injury with Hakan Sukur breaking his leg in a training ground accident. Sukur had just joined the club from Fatma.

Paul Gascoigne is apparently desperate to play again. He even mentioned in a recent interview he would love to play for Terry Venables again - at Leeds! He is now 35 but believes he can still do a job for a top club.

Bad news down Fulham way. Fulham have scrapped plans to redevelop Craven Cottage citing rising costs, the original plan now priced at over 100 million pounds. At this stage the club may go back to the old ground as a but should a financially viable offer become available then the choice was being left open. Fans had boycotted games at QPR's Loftus Road originally thinking they may not return and these fears seem to have turned to a possible reality. However fans of Charlton would tell you never give up, look what they did in their battle to return to the Valley when they eventually did and is now one of the most stadiums in London with a mixture of old and new.

Aston Villa players have to management to clear up the Danus Vassell contractual issues for the sake of the club. Many of his fellow professionals believe it could only be beneficial for the club to sign up Vassell once more. Vassell, 22, has 18 months left on his current contract but a new deal was stalled in the negotiations stage.

Bad news from Goodison Park this week with the club's statue of Everton great Dixie Dean being painted red by vandals before the recent Merseyside Derby.

In the merseyside derby Steven Gerrard made a horror tackle on Gary Naysmith and the FA have now announced a review of the incident after referee Graham Poll missed it. The FA are checking the video. After the match Gerrard apologised to everyone involved, claiming the incident purely accidental. Gerard Houllier has backed his player and claims that the midfielder is already being judged guilty. He does admit though that the challenge "looks bad" on television. He questioned why all the fuss if the referee and his assistants allowed the challenge to go unpunished.

A few days later Everton starlet, and future England star, Wayne Rooney, made a horror tackle on Birmingham defender Steve Vickers, and now faces an uncertain immediate future after being sent off for it.

Chelsea star Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink has warned Chelsea he would consider leaving should a "bigger" club come in for him. Hasselbaink blamed his flirtation with Barcelona pre season was the reason he had been left out on several occasions for Chelsea this season but warned Claudio Ranieri that he would need his goals going into the new year and further.

Meanwhile one of the tabloids in the UK is reporting that Newcastle are ready to sell Laurent Robert to Inter Milan for eight million pounds. Robert has been critical of his team mates on his own web site and when the Italians made contact with the loon the club apparently gave welcoming noises. The Sun also reported that his replacement had already been identified - Francisco Javier de Pedro of Real Sociedad. Robert's original arrival at St James Park had come after apparently dishing out on his team mates at Paris St Germain.

Interesting note on the very same day's edition. Former England international Neil Webb is now plying his trade as a postman. To think - he used to have his boots cleaned by David Beckham.

As the year wraps up for me the quote of this year in English football goes to Arsene Wenger after Alex Ferguson claimed his current Man Utd side were the best Wenger said "Everybody thinks they have the prettiest wife at home." So there!

Personally I think manager of the year may well go Gordon Strachan's way. He did wonders at Coventry for quite a while until even he was unable to stop them falling through the trap door. However now at Southampton he has brought them to a position of mid table security - somewhere fans have not seen their club for quite a while. Some were even speaking of an outside chance of qualifying for Europe. Come what may it is a good launching pad for next season when there is the real chance they will have a big battle for supremacy on the south coast, if, as looks likely, Portsmouth are promoted. So far have been top of the pops in the South for so long coming second to Pompey would be incomprehensible to most Saints fans.

So we close another year, may your English team go well in the new year!

Arsenal edged five points clear at the top of the FA Barclaycard Premiership on Sunday, but they were made to battle for their 1-1 draw with Liverpool at Highbury.

Thierry Henry coolly sent visiting goalkeeper Chris Kirkland the wrong way from the penalty spot with 11 minutes remaining to drag the Gunners level after an earlier spot-kick from Danny Murphy.

Murphy had given Liverpool a priceless advantage after 70 minutes, firing high past David Seaman after Sol Campbell brought Milan Baros down inside the Gunners' 18-yard box. Campbell had the ball in the net earlier in a forgettable first period, but was denied a goal when pulled up for a foul as he leapt to head home at a corner. It was the highlight of a half high on determination, but low on creativity. Arsenal bossed possession and territory, but found themselves up against a stubborn Liverpool back-line.

And things didn't look good for Liverpool when Michael Owen lumped out of action midway through the half with what was later diagnosed as a tight hamstring.

However, the visitors came out of their shell after the interval, with El-Hadji Diouf, Steven Gerrard and Baros all spurning good chances around the hour-mark.

When the lively Baros was felled by a clumsy Campbell tackle, Murphy made no mistake in putting Gerard Houllier's side ahead.

The Premiership champions responded by bringing on Francis Jeffers and the substitute made a quick impact when spinning past John Arne Riise, before controversially going down as the Norwegian was adjudged to pull him down.

Henry made no mistake to score his 11th league goal of the season.

In the day's other game, Alan Shearer's 15th goal of the season ultimately handed Newcastle an eighth successive Premiership win at St James' Park as Tottenham became their latest victims. Gary Speed had fired the Tynesiders ahead with 17 minutes gone and the points looked to be safe when Shearer headed home Craig Bellamy's cross 13 minutes after the break. But an own goal from substitute Nikos Dabizas, who spectacularly headed Teddy Sheringham's cross past Shay Given, ensured a nail-biting last 17 minutes.

Manchester United took their time to find a way past resilient Birmingham at Old Trafford as former United defender Steve Bruce made his first competitive return to the club as a manager but came away beaten 2-0.

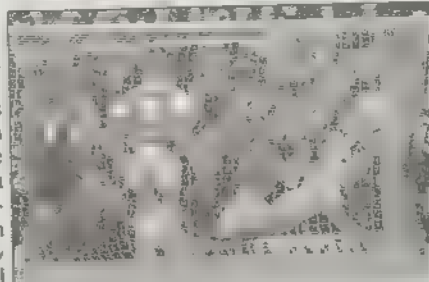
Uruguayan forward Diego Forlan ultimately broke the deadlock eight minutes before the interval for his

eight goal of the season. David Beckham marked his return to the starting line-up by chipping in a second (73) to move the Red Devils level on points with Chelsea, third only by virtue of inferior goal difference.

Despite spending most of the match on the back foot, Birmingham twice seriously tested Fabien Barthez in the second half, first through Clinton Morrison and then through Aliou Cisse.

Leeds' fortunes took another positive turn as they beat second-placed Chelsea 2-0 at Elland Road.

Jonathan Woodgate's 30th-minute



Danny Murphy of Liverpool scores their first goal from the penalty spot during the FA Barclaycard Premiership match between Arsenal and Liverpool at Highbury.

header set the Yorkshiremen on the way before 16-year-old James Milner scored his first senior home goal with a curling shot from the edge of the box on the stroke of half-time.

The only black mark for Leeds was an injury to Harry Kewell, who was forced to go off with a knee injury after Woodgate had opened the scoring. West Ham twice fought back from a goal down to draw 2-2 with Blackburn at Ewood Park.

Andy Cole's 150th Premiership goal heaped the pressure on Glenn Roeder to make it 2-1 but Jermain Defoe equalised with four minutes to go. A David James blunder allowed Damien Duff to get Rovers off to a great start in the fourth minute. Cole then hit the crossbar for the home side before Steve Lomas' deflected effort deceived Brad Friedel and flew in after 23 minutes and seemed to be the slice of luck the east Londoners needed. West Brom - one place above the Hammers in 19th - saw their own predicament worsen at The Valley against Charlton, who took the lead with the only goal of the game in the sixth minute through Kevin Lisbie's header. The Baggies are now ahead of West Ham only on goal difference, with both teams locked together on 16 points.

Southampton hotshot James Beattie's 12th goal in as many games in the 73rd minute appeared to have sunk Sunderland at St Mary's Stadium but the Black Cats fought back quickly and Tore Andre Flo nodded in from Kevin Kilbane's corner four minutes later.

However, Jo Tessem popped up in the fourth minute of injury time to condemn Sunderland to a heartbreaking 2-1 defeat. Bolton are now one point ahead of the Everters in 17th after they held Everton 0-0 at Goodison Park, thanks in particular to a wonderful save by Jussi Jaaskelainen to keep out Lee Carsley.

Wayne Rooney tried to put his Boxing Day dismissal at Birmingham behind him but was denied by the crossbar as he attempted to draw first blood against the Trotters.

Dion Dublin's 200th career goal helped Aston Villa beat Middlesbrough 1-0. The former Manchester United striker turned the ball in after 10 minutes from Juan Pablo Angel's centre and matters were made worse for Boro by the sending-off of Mark Wilson for a second bookable offence.

Fulham's woes continued as Nicolas Anelka's goal for Manchester City sealed a 1-0 win and left the Cottagers with just one win from their last eight games.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Aston Villa 1 - 0 Middlesbrough, Blackburn R. 2 - 2 West Ham U., Charlton Athletic 1 - 0 West Bromwich A., Everton 0 - 0 Bolton W., Fulham 0 - 1 Manchester C., Leeds U. 2 - 0 Chelsea, Manchester U. 2 - 0 Birmingham C., Southampton 2 - 1 Sunderland, Newcastle U. 2 - 1 Tottenham H., Arsenal 1 - 1 Liverpool.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arsenal	21	13	4	4	42	22	43
Chelsea	21	10	8	3	34	17	38
Man Utd	21	11	5	5	33	21	38
Newcastle	20	11	2	7	34	29	35
Everton	21	10	5	6	23	22	35
Liverpool	21	9	7	5	30	21	34
Southampton	21	8	8	5	24	20	32
Tottenham	21	9	5	7	30	30	32
Man City	21	9	3	9	28	29	30
Middlesbrough	21	8	5	8	25	20	29
Blackburn	21	7	8	6	28	25	29
Charlton	21	8	5	8	24	25	29
Leeds	21	8	3	10	28	27	27
Aston Villa	21	7	4	10	19	23	25
Birmingham	21	6	7	8	19	25	25
Fulham	21	6	5	10	23	27	23
Bolton	20	4	7	9	23	35	19
Sunderland	21	4	6	11	14	30	18
West Brom	21	4	4	13	16	32	16
West Ham	21	3	7	11	21	38	16

FIRST DIVISION

Brighton & Hove A. 2 - 2 Burnley, Crystal Palace 2 - 0 Preston North End, Post. Gillingham ? - ? Wimbledon, Grimsby T. 1 - 1 Norwich C., Ipswich T. 3 - 2 Walsall, Reading 2 - 1 Derby County, Rotherham U. 1 - 3 Millwall, Sheffield U. 0 - 0 Coventry C., Stoke C. 3 - 2 Sheffield W., Watford 1 - 2 Leicester C., Wolverhampton W. 1 - 2 Bradford C., Nottingham F. 1 - 2 Portsmouth.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Portsmouth	26	17	7	2	52	24	58
Leicester	26	16	6	4	41	24	54
Sheff Utd	25	13	7	5	37	24	46
Norwich	26	12	7	7	37	23	43
Nottm Forest	26	12	6	8	41	26	42
Reading	25	13	3	9	26	21	42
Crystal Palace	26	10	10	6	40	28	40
Coventry	26	11	7	8	34	30	40
Watford	26	11	5	10	31	38	38
Wolverhampton	25	10	7	8	42	28	37
Rotherham	26	10	7	9	44	34	37
Burnley	26	10	6	10	39	48	36
Gillingham	25	9	8	8	32	33	35
Ipswich	25	9	7	9	36	32	34
Millwall	26	9	7	10	30	39	34
Wimbledon	25	9	6	10	39	39	33
Derby	26	10	3	13	30	36	33
Preston	26	7	10	9	40	43	31
Walsall	26	8	4	14	39	44	28
Bradford	26	7	7	12	29	45	28
Grimsby	26	6	6	14	30	49	24
Stoke	26	4	8	14	29	48	20
Brighton	26	4	6	16	25	45	18
Sheff Wed	26	3	8	15	21	43	17

SECOND DIVISION

Peterborough U. 0 - 0 Northampton T., Barnsley 2 - 1 Port Vale, Blackpool 3 - 1 Colchester U., Brentford 1 - 0 Mansfield T., Chesterfield 2 - 2 Cheltenham, Plymouth Argyle 1 - 0 Notts County, Stockport County 1 - 4 Bristol C., Tranmere R. 3 - 0 Queens Park R., Wigan Athletic 2 - 0 Swindon T., Wycombe W. 1 - 2 Luton T., Cardiff C. 4 - 0 Huddersfield T., Crewe Alexandra 1 - 2 Oldham Athletic.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Wigan	24	17	5	2	40	13	56
Bristol City	24	15	4	5	50	27	49
Cardiff	24	15	4	5	41	20	49
Oldham	24	13	7	4	38	18	46
Crewe	24	13	5	6	40	20	44
Luton	24	10	7	7	36	31	37
Tranmere	24	11	4	9	33	36	37
Brentford	24	10	6	8	30	27	36
Blackpool	24	10	5	9	32	34	35
QPR	24	9	7	8	31	30	34
Chesterfield	24	10	4	10	21	26	34
Plymouth	24	8	9	7	31	30	33
Wycombe	24	7	6	11	31	35	27
Stockport	24	8	3	13	33	39	27
Swindon	24	7	6	11	28	37	27
Barnsley	24	7	6	11	28	38	27
Notts County	24	5	11	8	35	36	26
Colchester	24	6	8	10	24	33	26
Port Vale	24	7	5	12	28	38	26
Northampton	24	7	5	12	21	34	26
Mansfield	24	7	3	14	41	56	24
Peterborough	24	5	8	11	27	34	23
Cheltenham	24	5	8	11	22	35	23
Huddersfield	24	5	6	13	18	32	21

FIXTURES

Saturday 11 January

Bolton v Fulham

Chelsea v Charlton

Liverpool v Aston Villa

Man City v Leeds

Middlesbrough v

Southampton

Sunderland v Blackburn

West Brom v Man Utd

West Ham v Newcastle

Sunday 12 January

Birmingham v Arsenal

Tottenham v Everton

Quotable Quotes of 2002

2002 brought with it some outstanding football. But off field action also absorbed much of the spotlight. Here is a collection of some of the quotable quotes that made the year that was...

"The World Cup earlier this year will be remembered for a number of reasons including some of the superb bits of commentary to come from players and media alike.

FRANCE'S MARCEL DESAILLY COMES OUT WITH AN ABSOLUTE CORKER JUST BEFORE THE KICK OFF OF WORLD CUP 2002.

"There's no danger of us being too confident at the World Cup finals. If each player performs at their level then we don't have to worry about the opponents."

TWO WEEKS LATER AND THE CHAMPIONS WERE OUT OF THE TOURNAMENT.

At least we're going to Hong Kong next summer - you're not

JASON McATEER TAUNTS JIMMY FLOYD HASSELBAINK AFTER HOLLAND MISS OUT ON THE WORLD CUP... IN JAPAN.

I can buy you, I can buy your house, your family and I can buy that mountain we were running on in Slovenia during our preparations. You were a d***** player and you're the same as a coach"

ZLATKO ZAHOVIC TRIES TO IMITATE ROY KEANE THE BEST WAY HE CAN AT SLOVENIA COACH SRECKO KATANEC AFTER BEING SUBSTITUTED IN THEIR OPENING MATCH. LIKE KEANE, HE WAS SENT HOME.

Germany benefited from a last gasp hand job on the line" ITV'S DAVID PLEAT ON THE GERMANY'S TORSTEN FRINGS' HANDBALL AGAINST THE USA.

Normally when you get shirts, especially after a game in heat like that, they are soaked in sweat and absolutely stink. It was a surprise, to say the least, that Beckham's shirt smelt only of perfume. Either he sweats cologne or he obviously protects himself against body odour"

RONALDO MARVELS AT THE GREAT SMELL OF BECKS AND PERHAPS CONFIRMS WHAT MANY HAVE THOUGHT OF THE ENGLAND CAPTAIN'S WORK RATE

Football Players and Managers are continually proving the myth right that while excelling in one field their skills sadly fall behind in other areas.



Ronaldo: Made it into this year's page for his observations of David Beckham.

Paul Gascoigne proves he has a way with words

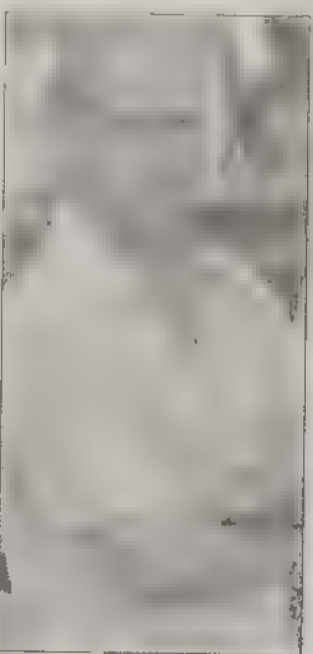
PAUL GASCOIGNE: "Did you watch the match?"

BUILDING WORKER, BEING INTERVIEWED ON ITV: "Yeah."

PAUL GASCOIGNE: "Did you watch it?"

BUILDING WORKER: "Yeah, the boss gave us time off."

PAUL GASCOIGNE: "Does your boss know you watched it?"



Paul Gascoigne: A safer option would have been to keep his mouth shut.

"I never saw myself wearing any other shirt... my only colour is white"

REAL MADRID'S FERNANDO MORIENTES EXPLAINS WHY HE REJECTED A MOVE TO TOTTENHAM

"Oliver Kahn is constantly portrayed as Superman while the rest of us are seen as sausages. As soon as he lets in a goal, everyone starts

shouting 'unstoppable', even if it wasn't. Then, when Goalkeeper X in the Bundesliga lets in a similar shot, he is branded a cucumber"

SCHALKE04 KEEPER FRANK RUST.

"I was really surprised when the FA knocked on my doorbell" MICHAEL OWEN.



Michael Owen: He may have fast feet, his brain now just needs to catch up.

"Wayne Rooney can go all the way to the top if he keeps his head firmly on the ground"

DAVID UNSWORTH.

Jesus Christ couldn't come in here with a system that would cure the way we had been playing"

SUNDERLAND'S HOWARD WILKINSON.

"Don't go to extra-time. We've got a flight to catch"

HOWARD WILKINSON AFTER BEING ASKED WHAT HE SAID TO HIS SUNDERLAND TEAM AT HALF-TIME TO INSPIRE THEM FROM 2-0 DOWN TO 3-2 VICTORS AT ARSENAL IN THE WORTHINGTON CUP.



Howard Wilkinson: After all his years coaching, even he can come up with a classic few lines.

"I could have put a set of pigeons in midfield and they would have played better"

PARTICK THISTLE MANAGER JOHN LAMBIE.

"Everybody says Steve McManaman played on the left for me in Euro 96 but he never played on the left. The one time he did play on the left was against Switzerland"

TERRY VENABLES.

"We dominated for 75% of the game, but we have to make sure we do that for the other 15"

DAVE JONES.

"There could have been four players sent off for each side. So the match would have ended up six against six"

SAM ALLARDYCE.



John Kosmina: Even the humble Brisbane Strikers coach can match it with the best in the world.

Even our own John Kosmina makes into this series. Now who says Australian soccer is not on the map.

"At this particular moment I'm consumed with guilt. I feel guilty about our results so far. I feel bad for our supporters, I feel responsible for letting them down. Guilt is the wrong word. I mean I'm consumed with responsibility. There is not a waking hour that at some time I don't question, assess, re-assess and question again everything I do as a coach and consequently what we do as a team in the pursuit of excellence, and in the pursuit of success. So guilt is the wrong word in the context of this discussion. My five-month-old son, Isaiah, has no concept of guilt because it's an acquired emotion but sadly one he will discover as he gets older. The original Isaiah was an Old Testament prophet who, according to record, predicted the coming of Christ in 736 BC. Not that I'm religious, quite the opposite in fact. I've

recently read a book called the Isaiah Effect. It's essentially about using the collective will of humanity to change the state of the world by prayer or thought. The concept is linked to an abstract field of science called Quantum Physics (see Albert Einstein)"

PROGRAMME NOTES BY BRISBANE STRIKERS' COACH JOHN KOSMINA.

"The end of the year is also the perfect opportunity to reflect on probably the most intense rivalry in world football. Manchester United Alex Ferguson and Arsenal's Arsene Wenger prove their off field guile.

We've played the best football and scored the most goals. Since Christmas we've been the best team in England"

SIR ALEX'S REACTION TO BEING KNOCKED OUT OF THE CHAMPIONS LEAGUE BY BAYER LEVERKUSEN.

"Everyone thinks they have the prettiest wife at home" - ARSENE'S RESPONSE. RUMOUR HAS IT THAT SIR ALEX HAD TO BE REASSURED THIS WASN'T A REFERENCE TO HIS OTHER HALF, KATHY

"A football team is like a beautiful woman. When you do not tell her so, she forgets she is beautiful. It is the same with a team. When you do not tell them they are good, they can also forget"

ARSENE PROVES HE IS A BORN ROMANTIC.

"It would not surprise me if we went unbeaten all season" ARSENE WENGER WITH THE MOST OUTLANDISH PREDICTION PRIOR TO THE START OF THE EPL.



Arsene Wenger: Nominated for a series of classic quotes this year.

U-TURN OF THE YEAR PROUDLY GOES TO FERGIE FOR THIS OUTSTANDING

EXAMPLE

"I'm pleased to be staying - but once this contract is up, that will be it, I have no intention of staying on at the club in any capacity whatsoever"

SIR ALEX FERGUSON, 10th FEBRUARY

"I could go on for another three years. I would consider staying on again, postponing my retirement. It will depend on how I feel in two years. The thing about life is that your health determines everything"

SIR ALEX FERGUSON, 17th NOVEMBER

"Quotes by the one and only Roy Keane.

You're a f***** w*****. You don't know what you are f***** doing. You're a crap manager and a crap person"

IMMEDIATELY AFTER HE ANNOUNCES HE WON'T BE, FEATURING IN JAPAN?KOREA.

"I'd waited almost 180 minutes for Alfie, three years if you looked at it another way. Now he had the ball on the far touchline. Alfie was taking the piss, I'd waited long enough. I f***** hit him hard. The ball was there (I think). Take that, you c*nt. And don't ever stand over me again sneering about fake injuries. And tell your pal Wetherall there's some for him as well

KEANE REVEALS ALL IN HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND RECEIVES A LOT OF PUBLICITY AND A FIVE-MATCH BAN IN RETURN.



Roy Keane: Never one to shy away from what he is feeling.



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NSW PREMIER LEAGUE SEASON 2002/2003

THE STORY SO FAR

The NSW Premier League 2002/2003 went into the Christmas/New Year Break after completing 5 rounds of the season. Contrary to popular believe, the Central Coast Coasties have disproved many soothsayers of doom and gloom and have found themselves on top of the table with the thoroughbred outfit of the A.P.L.A.-Leichhardt Tigers.

Perennial finalists, Blacktown City Demons, are sitting in third place after a slowish start to the season by their own standards. But like any good race horse, the Demons will gain momentum as the season goes on and opponents will always find it difficult to take points away from them.

Canterbury Marrickville Olympic, under new coach Greg Woodhouse, is another team that is beginning to find form after a shaky start. It's a testament to the tightness of the competition that this club that was last after round 3 can be fourth at the end of round 5!

The newly promoted Rockdale City Suns round out the top 5 and are beginning to settle into the top flight of NSW Soccer and a new home ground at Cringila as well. With a wealth of experience within their ranks, the Suns will be well pleased with their early season form, especially with the top striker Spase Najdoski sitting on 5 goals leading the league.

The remainder of the 7 teams that make up the competition are separated by only 2 points. Due to the cut-throat nature of the league, a win at this stage could mean the difference between sitting at the bottom or threatening for a top 5 spot. Belconnen Blue Devils are another team knocking on the door in 6th position and is also settling into a new home venue at the McKellar Soccer Centre. From all reports the surface, facilities and licensed club have made the long trip down the Hume Highway very bearable, but as many have already found that is where the hospitality ends with few visitors leaving with maximum points.

Under new coach John Calicja last year's champions, the Parramatta Eagles, will be very disappointed with their current 7th position. The Eagles main problem has been a lack of goals. Conceding goals has never been an issue with the likes of Mark Revelly at the back and Jason Holmes between the sticks. The



The Central Coast Coasties have shocked the pundits and are sitting on top of the NSW Premier League table after five rounds.

purchase of Super League sensation Tim Gledhill hasn't quite bore fruit yet due to a niggling hamstring injury to the striker, and unfortunately, no one else has stepped up and taken on the role of goal poacher.

The St George Saints also find themselves on 6 points with the Eagles and Blue Devils, but 8th on goal difference. Another team that was written off in the pre-season, but have surprised many with their ability to score goals, but unfortu-

nately this is also coupled with their ability to concede goals. A team that needs to add consistency to the repertoire and can beat or at least challenge any team on any day if they choose.

The Penrith Panthers began the sea-

son like a house on fire with an exciting 3-0 victory over the Fairfield Bulls which put them on top of the table after round 1. Unfortunately for the Panthers, the loss of the experienced Peter Bennett through injury and a few unlucky results has meant that it has been a slippery slide back down to 8th position at the break. A team that traditionally begins the season at 100 mph due to superior strength and fitness, they will need to find a new messiah to fight for a finals spot or avoid relegation.

Who could have predicted that the bottom three teams after five rounds would be Bonnyrigg White Eagles, Bankstown City Lions and Fairfield Bulls.

Bonnyrigg White Eagles is undergoing somewhat of a rebuilding phase and are definitely feeling the loss of last year's top goal scorer Jimmy Aschner. Added to that the loss of other key players such as Dong Ki Kim, Nick Bosevski and Freddy Umlil, there is much work to be done at the Serbian Centre to avoid the disgrace of a relegation battle.

The greatest surprise so far has been the fall of the Bankstown City Lions. A team that many feared would collect all accolades come the business end of the season has failed to produce the goods on and off the field. The list of champions assembled by Lee Sterrey would have been the envy of many other clubs in the league, but injuries and a few other unfortunate incidents gave the former Marconi and Newcastle United coach little choice but to fall on his sword for the betterment of the club. Time will tell whether this team of champions will combine to form a champion team.

Fairfield Bulls coach Craig Sharpley, will be extremely disappointed with the start his charges have made to their campaign. Another club that recruited widely in the off-season, the results haven't been forth coming. The lack of goals from the striking duo of Mark Hoenselaars and Matthew Borg seems to be the missing link that needs to be found before the bulls can lift themselves off the bottom and threaten a finals berth. With the personnel in the squad, this is not impossible.

Greg Stock, Paul Goodwin, Graham Cooke and Joe Russo run the ruler over the teams after the first five rounds and look into the crystal ball for the remainder of the season.

SOCCER NSW

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SOCCER NSW



CENTRAL COAST COASTIES

By Paul Goodwin

Season so far: As leaders going into the Christmas break few can fault the Coasties' efforts on the field, especially considering the usual injuries that clubs face, the body blow being the loss of club skipper and past Gold Medal winner, Peter Preston, before a competition ball had been kicked.

The youngsters knuckled down well and put together some very impressive results that left them as one of only two unbeaten teams.

Some will point to the fact that they have not yet met many of the big guns such as A.P.I.A., Blacktown, Belconnen or Bonnyrigg, but wins at Rockdale and Fairfield on their

travels and a point at Bankstown indicate plenty of promise.

If it does crumble a little, after the next few tough games, the Coasties would still have achieved more than most pundits expected and there is no certainty that this will happen.

They will now be disappointed with anything less than a top six finish, at this stage and they could do even better than that.

Strengths: Unity and fitness, together with mental toughness, dedication and focus.

Weaknesses: Perhaps inexperience at this level, across the whole team, may manifest itself as the season unfolds.

Top Scorer: James Monic (3)

Coach's Comments: "It's great to be on top, but we won't be getting carried away," says John McLafferty.

"We have a long way to go and have worked hard to get where we are and I know the players are enjoying the successes, but are sensible enough to know that the next match could see them lose their undefeated record."

Under 19 Player(s) to Watch: Ben Murrell and Darren Cooper are two very young players who have made rapid strides this season already.

Prediction: Looks like a team that may be challenging for a finals' spot now, having appeared more likely to be at the other end of the ladder before the season began.

CENTRAL COAST



The experience of Pat Bradley has helped the Coasties go top.

A.P.I.A. LEICHHARDT TIGERS

By Joe Russo

Strengths: A solid defence led by captain Marcus Stergiopoulos. After a high scoring three-all draw with Fairfield Bulls in Round 1, the A.P.I.A. defence has proven to be one of the most difficult to penetrate this season conceding only one goal in their last four games.

The side's experience is a positive and in particular veteran goalkeeper, Bob Catlin, seems to have found a new lease of life in his return season at the club. He is proving to be a tower of strength and is still cat-like in his reflexes. Catlin is arguably as good as, if not better than, any other goalkeeper in the competition.

Ante Moric, another NSL regular with

Sydney United and Olympic Sharks, has given the side a very attractive creative option especially on the left side of the park and is proving to be a smart buy for A.P.I.A.

Weaknesses: The Tigers lack a quality striker and finishing has been poor. It was highlighted especially in the second half against Parramatta Eagles and both Zlatko Arambasic and Steve Karavatakis look to be past their prime. A.P.I.A. seem to lack that killer instinct in front of goal.

Top Scorer: Zlatko Arambasic 3 (including one penalty and one rebound from a penalty he missed).

Coach Les De Celis, impression of the season so far: "You've got to be happy at the

top of the league but there's a long way to go. Any of the coaches won't be too excited just yet and probably at the end of January the league will start to take shape. We are an experienced side with a little bit of depth but it is early days yet."

Under 19 Player(s) to Watch: striker Robert Younis. He is the younger brother of NSL player Ray Younis who is with Parramatta Power. Younis may well be the type of player required in the Tigers, senior team.

"He is a dynamic striker who scores in every game. He is very clinical," says his Under 19 coach John Romeo.

Prediction: Top 5



Ante Moric has provided the Tigers with creativity on the left.

BLACKTOWN CITY DEMONS

By Greg Stock

Season So Far: The Demons have started the season exactly where they left off as last years runners up, winning matches and rising quickly to a top three position.

The signings of Simon Cantanzaro, Dion Valle and Luke Roodenberg have all paid dividends with all three showing that they are class acts. Midfielder Kane Rastall is also in the midst of a purple patch in form and with defenders Paul Yates and Damien Foxe pushing hard for starting spots after injury, the signs look good for Blacktown.

Strengths: The hardworking Blacktown City midfield has been exceptional and the

cornerstone on which their victories are built. Cantanzaro, Rastall, Nikas and Valle give the team strength and creative ability for the likes of Reid, Imaya and Roodenberg to be well supplied with goalscoring opportunities.

Weaknesses: Defensively the Demons are probably a little susceptible given that Foxe and Yates are still recovering from off season surgery. Willard, Hokin and Gatt have held the fort stoutly but there is no substitute for quality and the sooner the above two return to active duty, the better.

Top Scorer: Luke Roodenberg 4 goals

Coaches Comment: "I've been happy

with the way we have started the season, even though I feel we are still a long way from our best form," said coach Brian Brown.

"I always thought we would get better the longer the season progressed and I still think we are a few weeks away from producing our best football."

Under 19 Player(s) to Watch: Player? What about the whole team. Currently sitting atop of the Under 19 table with 21 goals and conceding only 4. The future is definitely bright for the Demons.

Prediction: Once again this quality outfit will figure in the top five.



Simon Cantanzaro's signing has helped pay dividends for the Demons.



SOCCER NSW



CANTERBURY-MARRICKVILLE OLYMPIC

By Paul Goodwin

Season so far: Canterbury-Marrickville looks to be on a much more even keel after some inconsistencies in past campaigns. Their bright start has included good wins at Bonnyrigg and Bankstown and more are sure to come.

Blacktown found out on day one that The Bernies were a useful side and form since has only reinforced that. The fighting qualities are there too, as evidenced by the late equaliser at the Central Coast.



Strengths: The early appointment of the new coaching team has given the club a great start.

Good cohesion and discipline, combined with a strong sense of self belief and greater industry are now coming out as a result of that sound planning.

Weaknesses: Lack of an acknowledged leader on the park and some minor kinks which may need to be ironed out, with concentration perhaps something still to be looked at.

Top Scorer: Paul Bourke and Allan Picken both on 2.

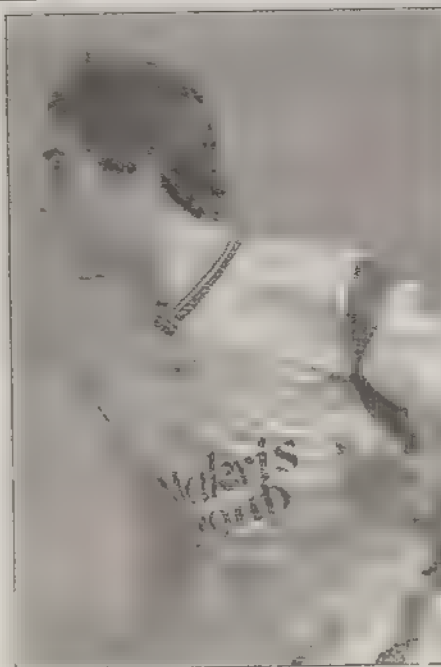
Coach's Comments: Greg Woodhouse is in very good spirits considering that 14 new players have come in at Henson Park, though he is still expecting an up and down season.

"We have a two year plan here and I want first to stabilize things at the club, though we are aiming to reach the semis in this, our first season."

Woodhouse was referring to the coaching trio of Stan Ackerley, Mike Gibson and himself, three former Soccerroos with a wealth of experience and he is the first to pay tribute to their expertise and support.

"It is coming together well here and Stan and Mike have been a huge help. They are great to bounce ideas off and so on."

"Of my players, so far young Michael O'Riley has blossomed and is making strides fast, Paul Bourke has been great and is bril-



Midfielder George Norha has provided good service to his strikers.

lant to coach, while Allan Picken has picked up well after a slow start when I handed him the captaincy. It took him to a while to adapt to the role, but he is a good motivator.

"Sasha Utjesenovic is unquestionably one of the best defenders in the league, Cormack Begley has been a revelation and having taken his chance it will make it tough for Tom Moric to get his job back, though he should come in soon, even if it means some reshuffling to fit him in."

Under 19 Player(s) to Watch: Right midfielder Ryan Earp, mid-field workhorse Frank Pellizzeri and attacking midfielder Joseph Fichera all show great promise and will get their chance in first grade as the season unfolds.

Prediction: The Bernies look certain to be in there when the finals approach and they will be worthy candidates.

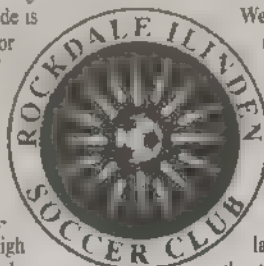
ROCKDALE CITY SUNS

By Paul Goodwin

Season so far: After a stuttering start the boys at Rockdale have done enough to suggest that they will win many more games yet in this their debut season at this level.

Strengths: The main thing that stands out in the Rockdale side is its midfield. With three senior players of the calibre of Malcolm Bideau, Denis Ahilovic and Ben Deighan, the rest of the team can profit enormously.

Bideau has always been a good defender and ball winner and his contribution is high as usual, while Deighan, also a member of the Super League championship-winning Rockdale side, continues to win plenty of the ball and distribute it well.



when he has it.

Alilovic, the third man in the middle to come through the winter with distinction, has made the move up with great success.

As a very attacking midfielder Alilovic has figured in many good moves this season and his presence makes gun striker Spase Najdoski's job a breeze.

Weaknesses: The team has missed some of its experienced defenders, both stoppers.

Alex Kotovich, out for the season and Eddie Wong, his natural replacement, have both been absent. As a result the defence has lacked the necessary bite, but the team's defensive play could improve once Wong makes his way back from injury.

So far the team has succumbed to late

pressure in three of its five games and that must be down to the lack of experience at the back, as much as to opposition fight-backs or refereeing decisions going against them.

Top Scorer: Spase Najdoski 5 (inc. 1 pen)

Coach's Comments: Director of Coaching Bill Pilovski feels that everyone should be proud of what has been achieved so far this term.

"We lost points in the last few minutes of some games due to a lack of concentration and defensive lapses."

"The committee here is doing a great job in getting the money the coaching staff needed to assemble a good team and they can take a lot of the credit for our on-field performances in this, our first season in the Premier League, explained Pilovski.

"It has made the job of coach Mile Todorovski and myself so much easier and

their efforts cannot be underestimated, he concluded.

Under 19 Player(s) to Watch: Nathan



Rockdale's attacking midfielder Denis Alilovic, has figured in many moves.

Trajevski, who is out for the season after suffering broken ribs in a trial game against Macedonian giants Varda Skopje, recently, would have been sure to figure in the club's first grade plans before too long.

The sweeper-stopper had a punctured lung to contend with as well and was a great product of the junior development programme - at Rockdale.

Sash Stevoski is a fine midfielder, who had one year in the youth squad at Olympic Sharks and another at Northern Spirit and is still only 17 and another Rockdale junior set for big things, while John Veligrnis, the top scorer last winter, has already nabbed a few and looks a great prospect.

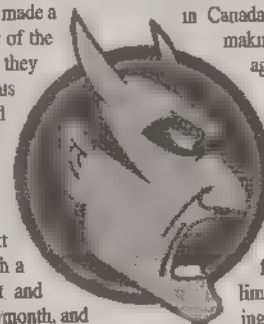
Prediction: Perhaps not a top five finish this time, but Rockdale does look like staying well clear of the relegation zone.

BLACKTOWN BLUE DEVILS

By Graham Cooke

The longer gap between the winter and summer season has been a boon to coach Lino Fiorese who bases the Blue Devils' game plan on strength and high work rate, necessitating a thorough preparation. Last season the team made a dreadful start and a quarter of the campaign had gone before they began to hit their peak. This time the Devils have fared better despite the strength of early opposition.

There will be problems facing Fiorese after the Christmas break. Matt Cachia has reported in with a stress fracture in his foot and will probably be out for the month, and the team must begin to score more goals. There are question marks against the ability



of the 37-year-old Marko Perinovic to last a full season, and Daniel Macor has, as yet, been unable to recapture last season's sparkling form up front.

On the credit side, the performance of Valerio Galeotti in Cachia's wing back position against Blacktown was encouraging. Daniel Camara is returning from study leave in Canada and his brother, Stewart, is

making good progress in his battle against injury. To have them both available is a luxury Fiorese would relish.

Increasingly, one of the key players in the Devils' line-up is attacking midfielder Michael Katz. Up to now his long, surging runs and support for the forwards have produced limited results, but there is a feeling around the club that the formula will click and the result will be dangerous for any defence that has to face him.

A question mark must hang over the future of Ivo de Jesus. Hailed as the club's most important signing, the midfielder has seen hardly any action and was not even named on the bench in the last three games. The coach continues to insist there can be no favourites and de Jesus must show more commitment at training in order to be considered.

Strengths: Fitness and work rate.

Weaknesses: Too few goals scored.

Top Scorer: Marko Perinovic 2.

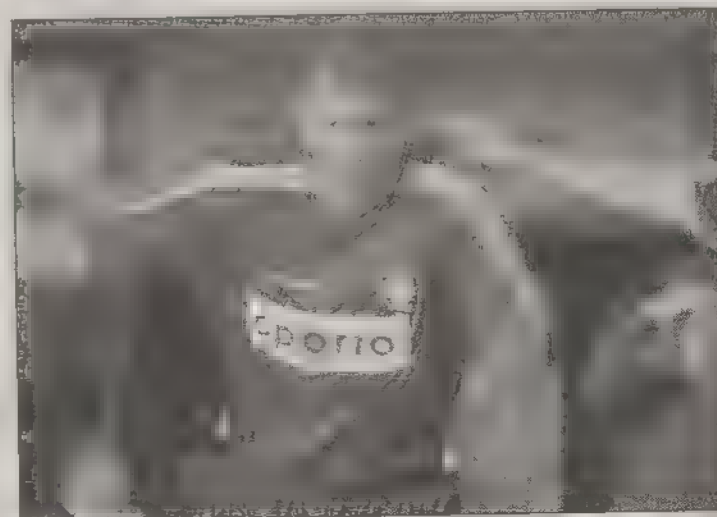
Coach's Comment After Five Rounds: We have had a tough opening, playing all our opponents in last season's top five, and have survived fairly well. January will be a make-or-break month for us as we come up against opponents we must beat if we are to make an impression on the competition.

Under 19 Player(s) to Watch: Steve O'Callaghan, son of the former Canberra Raiders rugby league star. Still very green, but a defender in the Jason Dunn mould.

As Fiorese sums up: "We have shown time and again in the opening games that we

can get into scoring positions and create opportunities. The frustration lies in the finishing. If we can get that right I have no doubt we can improve on last season's performance."

Prediction: Will be a finals contender.



37-year-old Marko Perinovic still going strong for the Blue Devils.

SOCCER NSW

PARRAMATTA EAGLES

By Greg Stock

Season So Far: A great start to the year with a 2-1 victory over Bankstown was followed up by a goal drought, which saw the Eagles unable to hit the net for three straight games.

Their draw against APIA Leichhardt in the round before Christmas was full of merit and they showed enough to suggest they look to be getting back to their best form.

Considering coach John Calleja had to replace the likes of Glenn Sprod, Mirko Jurij and Jimmy Bakis from last seasons championship winning side, the signs look promising that the new combination is starting to come together and the Eagles will be soaring again come semi-final time.

Strengths: The defence ably led by

Michael Kladis has been the cornerstone of the Parramatta game. With Paul O'Grady returning from Singapore to link up with Mark Reveley as the two stoppers, not much gets past their back three.

Even while the club was going through a goalscoring drought, the defence remained solid to keep them in the game.

Weaknesses: A lack of potency on the forward line. The boots of Jimmy Bakis and Daniel Cummins have been extremely difficult to fill with the likes of Adam Anderson, Daniel Kukucka, Tim Gledhill and Anthony Mondello all given a chance, but sadly a combination has yet to be found.

Top Scorer: All players on 1 goal

Coaches Comment: "I have been quite

pleased with our start to the season, given that we lost so many quality players during the off-season," said coach John Calleja.

"It takes time to build some momentum and we will improve when the competition resumes. My assistant coach John McKie has been working hard on our forwards and we should see some rapid improvement in the next few weeks."

Under 19 Player(s) to Watch: 16-year-old promising young sweeper Mitchell Thompson is definitely a player of the future.

Prediction: Last years champions can never be written off and a top five position would not be out of the question.



Veteran Mark Reveley still going strong at the back for the Eagles.

ST GEORGE SAINTS

By Greg Stock

Season So Far: Predicted by many as this years wooden spoon candidates, the Saints have done enough to suggest they'll give as good as they get this year. Two solid victories over Bonnyrigg and Fairfield raised the odd eye-brow giving the club and their army of loyal supporters a major boost.

Sadly veteran striker Bruno Beddoni has been struggling with a hamstring injury but if he can recover over the break and be reunited with Orhan Dincer and the underrated Jason Lal expect plenty of fireworks on the Saints forward line.

Strengths: The coaching of Manny Spanoudakis. Manny knows the qualities and limitations of his players and he also

knows the way to get the best out of them. Playing as a unit they are very difficult to break down and as we have seen, capable of winning matches against any sort of opposition.

Weaknesses: A perceived lack of squad depth has counted against the side. In the absence of Bruno Beddoni the forwards have struggled while at the back the loss of Olyroo Sebastian Sinozic overseas is going to be hard to fill.

Top Scorer: A number of players all on 1 goal

Coaches Comment: "We always knew our lot was going to be struggling week to week and avoiding the relegation dogfight, and that's exactly how it's panning out," said coach Manny Spanoudakis.

"We proved we can match it with the profile sides beating both Fairfield and Bonnyrigg, and if we can keep chipping away I still believe we are more than capable of finishing midtable."

Under 19 Player(s) to Watch: Brothers George and Kosta Lagoudakis are attacking midfielders who have impressed many with their high work rate. These products of the St George system will be servants of the club for many years to come.

Prediction: Midtable if they get some consistency otherwise a relegation battle looms.



Jason Lal can provide the fireworks for the Saints when needed.

PENRITH PANTHERS

By Paul Goodwin

Season so far: Panthers' coach Tony Rasmussen is very pleased with the early season form of Luke O'Connell, stopper Daniel Wells and midfielders Dantel McCann, Luke Boyd and Chad Lewis.

On the down side, Rasmussen highlights the injury problems that have beset his team in the opening five rounds, in particular the loss of Peter Bennett in the early minutes of the Blacktown City game that affected the result of that match and also impacted on the Central Coast contest.

On the positive side, Rasmussen looks to the return of Paul Marosevic and Ryan Noble, who have been out injured and will play their first games of the season in the opening round of 2003.

Finally Rasmussen has confidence in his

strikers Rod Hutchison, Danny Hinton and Tim O'Connell, and expects them to team well in the new year and bang some goals.

Strengths: Tremendous team discipline, unity and a rigorous pre-season fitness regime have been invaluable. But more important is the team bonding, with the unit clearly seen as one, from the coach and captain of first grade right down to the Under 19 players.

Weaknesses: Maybe there is a lack of experience and old heads, with only Osvaldo El Ali, Ben Wright and Danny Hinton having extensive exposure at this level. Captain Luke O'Connell, however, has good high level experience, and the majority of the squad had first grade experience in 2001/2002.

Top Scorer: Rod Hutchison (3)

Coach's Comments: Tony Rasmussen feels that the competition is very even, and it will come down to the side that takes its chances best that will top the table. Rasmussen is disappointed to lose Peter Bennett to Singapore, but supports the decision by the utility player to go. He expects his side to lift even without Bennett.

Under 19 Player(s) to Watch: Clearly Garrett Dowling, Cactano Luna and Michael McCrory are the standouts from the Under 19 side and each is pressing hard for a spot in the top team.

Prediction: The club may be able to steer clear of the relegation zone but it is sure to be tight this season and very hard to see more than a point or two separating half a dozen sides at this stage of the season.

Should finish among that cluster of clubs below half way, but just how far down remains to be seen.



Daniel McCann as showed some good early season form.

SOCCER NSW

BONNYRIGG WHITE EAGLES

By Paul Goodwin

Season so far: The tale of woe began before a ball was kicked when players who were expected to sign for the club chose to go elsewhere.

Dong Ki Kim who was a key man in the club's plans, but moved to Brisbane, instead, for his work and had to be replaced at the eleventh hour.

Then Nick Bosevski left it very late before announcing that he was off to Denmark, while Fred Umh, who started the season, took off for trials at Rapid Vienna and won't return until later in the month.

Added to this is the suspension of Michael Hawysnuk, who was sent off in the stunning Canterbury loss and another niggling ankle injury to new signing Joe Bruni, all made life very hard for coach Ljube Jancev and his men.

Zarko Glavas joined from a year playing in the Swiss League, but the 20 year old

midfield/striker, who was in the youth side at Partizan Belgrade, is out injured too.

The club picked up another striker, Kindness Agwu, at the last minute to fill the gap, but he will take time to settle at his new club, though he shows great promise.

Strengths: As in previous campaigns the White Eagles play a good quality European style of soccer, with skill on the ball, plenty of experience and sharpness which do auger well for the side, once they can sort out some injury woes.

Weaknesses: This is a team of old heads but there are also some young players and these will need to lift their concentration to gain better consistency. The team also seems to have no natural leader at the moment and that will need to be addressed.

Top Scorer: Shane Knight 2

Coach's Comments: Ljube Jancev is upbeat about how things are going at The

Serbian Centre.

"The young players who are not experienced enough are finding it hard, but our form has not been as bad as results might indicate."

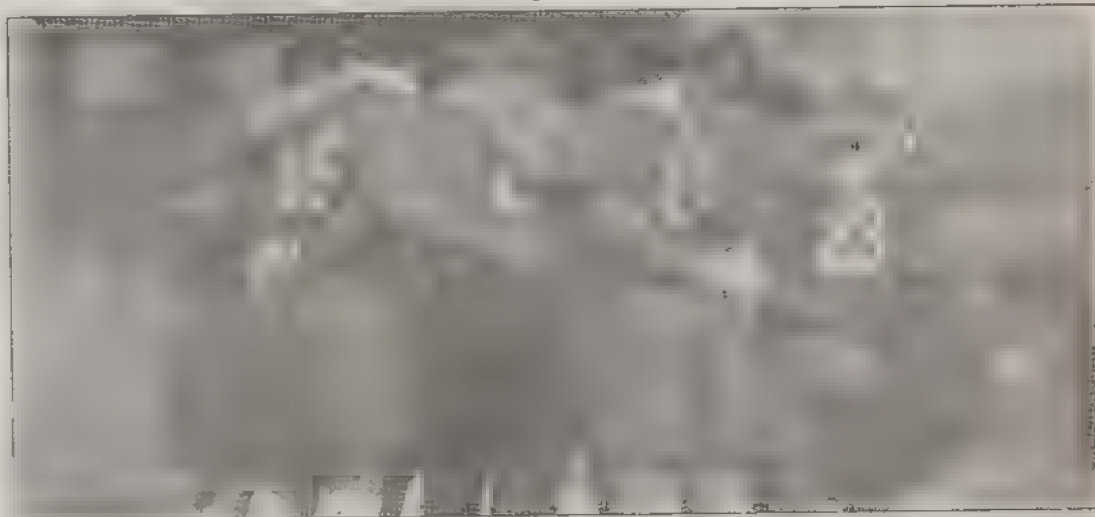
"For instance in our most recent match at St George we hit the post three times and the game was played in high winds. It was only towards the end that St George got on top. We do need to find one more striker but there is plenty of time to turn it around."

"We will be stronger as the season unfolds," insisted the genial Jancev.

Under 19 Player to Watch: The standout player so far has been Milorad Simonovic a local junior who has become

one of the club's most promising strikers this season so far.

Prediction: Is it conceivable that Bonnyrigg would finish below half way this term? With so much going for so many other clubs this year, there is going to be a real dog fight for those eagerly sought finals' places and perhaps this year may be one in which the White Eagles find themselves outside the elite for the first time.



Bonnyrigg will need to pull together to figure at the business end of the season.

BANKSTOWN CITY LIONS

By Greg Stock

Season So Far: A slow start to the year for the Lions has seen them sitting second from bottom with just one win and a draw from five starts.

With a limited preparation of just three trial games, former coach Lee Sterrey had always said his side would start slowly and build momentum as the competition progressed, but his resignation after the Canterbury match was unexpected and has rocked the club to its very core.

Strengths: A veritable who's who of the

NSL in the playing ranks with the likes of Brad Swancott, Glenn Moore, Todd M. Manus, Ralph Bova, Elias Augernos, Norman Tome and Colin Luff all on the books.

The partnership of Luff and Tome looks well placed to become one of the best in the league, as they get better and better with each match.

Weaknesses: Injuries have seen up to 7 regular first grade players out of key matches. The loss of coach Lee Sterrey is also going to affect the club especially while caretaker George Fernandez gets his head around the position.

Comment: "It was always going to be a struggle early on," said striker Colin Luff.

"Our preparation was limited to just three matches while most other clubs had double that, so our combination was always going to take time. Our work at training has been excellent and if we can just get our best eleven on the park, we will win more games than we lose."

Under 19 Player(s) to Watch: Two home grown players in striker Rod Reyes and attacking midfielder Daku Falcon are the standouts in the lower grade.

In particular Falcon who has made a couple of first team appearances off the bench.

Prediction: Forget about the current crisis currently enveloping the Lions they should finish midtable and maybe knock on the door of a finals position.



Glenn Moore will need all his experience to help lift the Lions off the bottom of the table.

FAIRFIELD BULLS

By Greg Stock

Season So Far: A dismal start to the year by anybodys standards has seen the Bulls slide down the table to the very bottom. Started off the year brightly with a win and a draw from their first three matches but two straight losses have plunged the club into crisis.

At the time of going to press the football committee at the Bulls had resigned and that the future of a number of key personnel at the club was in doubt. This news doesn't auger well for a revival in the sides fortunes, so early in the season.

Strengths: In three words, "Borg and Hoenselaars." Sadly both players are yet to fire but when they do, and they will, expect the goals to start flowing.

Weaknesses: Defensively the Bulls are in complete disarray. Injuries to Mitchell Daley and Jason Connolly have impacted badly on the side with youngster Sefer Yildiz the only player to be able to hold his head up. If both Daley and Connolly can get themselves right over the break, Fairfield are half a chance of getting themselves back on track.

Coaches Comment: "We have had a few setbacks but realistically we are only four

points out of the five and we will bounce back," said coach Craig Sharpley.

"Injuries and suspensions haven't helped the cause, but with a new side like this it was never going to be easy and we will improve over the next couple of weeks."

Our work ethic has been strong and I am very encouraged by our attitude and morale, so we'll keep hanging in there and it will happen."

Under 19(s) Player to Watch: Anthony Casamento is a young defender who is strong on the ball and at the moment his getting plenty of work in the Under 19's.

This experience can only make him a better player in the future.

Prediction: Midtable hovering over relegation.



Mark Hoenselaars needs to find the back of the net for the Bulls.



SOCCER NSW



FROM THE SIDELINES BY GREG STOCK

*Two clubs are hitting the headlines this week, going through a mini crisis of sorts. The first is Bankstown City who have parted ways with head coach Lee Sterrey, the day after the Lions were beaten 2-1 by Canterbury-Marrickville.

Sterrey's resignation comes on the back of a couple of bad losses for the club who has slipped to eleventh on the back of one win and a draw. The former Newcastle Breakers and Marconi boss bought in a number of profile personnel that lifted the playing stocks of the club with many pundits predicting a top five position, but as yet that early promise has not been translated into points.

"I'm very disappointed," Sterrey told From the Sidelines. "I thought we had something special at the club and we had plenty to offer, but certain people didn't see it the same way I did and I took the action I did for the betterment of all parties."

At the end of the day I wish the club well, but it's not an environment that I'd do any sort of work in." With a lengthy injury list it was never going to be easy but with the likes of Luff and Tome starting to hit their straps a turnaround in form was merely a matter of time.

Midfielder Raphael Bove first learnt about the news at Monday night before training when addressed by a club official. "All the players are shocked," said Bove.

"It hasn't been the start to the season we would have liked, but we all knew this team would take time to gel and that's exactly what has happened. As players we feel a lot of responsibility for what has transpired but at the end of the day we need to buckle down and start winning some games."

*The other club in the news is Fairfield Bulls whose football committee has resigned after the club had slipped to last on the competition table. While the position of head coach Craig Sharpley isn't currently under review, there will be plenty of pressure there over the next few weeks to start turning around some ordinary form.

*Premier League fans wondering about the whereabouts of former A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt and Fraser Park

striker Derek Poimer, should look no further than the Far East. It seems Poimer is jetting out for trials with a Chinese club in the first two weeks of January.

On the subject of players overseas trialling as we mentioned here last week, Bonnyrigg's Freddy Umlil is currently in Europe having trials with Austrian first division club Rapid Vienna.

*Rockdale City Suns defender Alex Kotevich is out for the year after a nasty knee injury sustained in the under 19s match against Canterbury-Marrickville.

Kotevich had been on the comeback trail from a fractured ankle when he sustained the injury in the last minute of the game, which will require a full reconstruction. Our commiserations Alex, and we will look forward to seeing you back on the park soon.

*Off the rumor mill, one club making quite a splash in the recruiting stakes for this year's Winter Super League competition is Ian Gillan's Fraser Park. Sydney University coach Stewart Porter also tells us that he has a couple of interesting triallists down at training, one making quite an impact is the younger brother of the leagues second top scorer last year, Rob Smithies.

*Word around the camp fire is that former Blacktown City Demons assistant coach Tom McMorrow, is looking to coach in the Premier or Super League again.

McMorrow took this season off to spend more time with his young family, but the urge to get back on the training paddock and call the shots from the sideline has taken over. With many coaches at the moment who seem to have "the full support of the board" it may just be a matter of time before Tom's turn arrives.

*Hot off the presses is that the St George Saints have signed former NSL and S-League striker Abbaas Saad from Second Division Auburn Star. No longer possessing the speed of his younger days Abbaas may provide the Saints with much experience and quality services currently lacking in their team.

FIRST GRADE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Central Coast Coasties	5	3	2	0	8	2	11
A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt Tigers	5	3	2	0	9	4	11
Blacktown City Demons	5	2	2	1	7	6	8
C'bury-M'ville Olympic	5	2	2	1	6	5	8
Rockdale City Suns	5	2	1	2	9	8	7
Belconnen Blue Devils	5	1	3	1	5	5	6
Parramatta Eagles	5	1	3	1	3	3	6
St George Saints	5	2	0	3	6	7	6
Penrith Panthers	5	1	2	2	7	7	5
Bonnyrigg White Eagles	5	1	1	3	5	8	4
Bankstown City Lions	5	1	1	3	4	8	4
Fairfield Bulls	5	1	1	3	6	12	4

NEXT ROUND

ROUND 6 FIRST GRADE

HOME TEAM	AWAY TEAM	DATE	KICK-OFF	GROUND
Central Coast Coasties	v Belconnen Blue Devils	Sat 4 Jan	7.00pm	Plum Park
Bonnyrigg White Eagles	v Bankstown City Lions	Sat 4 Jan	7.00pm	Serbian Centre
Blacktown City Demons	v A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt Tigers	Sat 4 Jan	7.00pm	Gabbie Stadium
Rockdale City Suns	v Fairfield Bulls	Sat 4 Jan	7.00pm	John Crehan Park
C'bury-M'ville Olympic	v Penrith Panthers	Sun 5 Jan	6.00pm	Henson Park
Parramatta Eagles	v St George Saints	Sun 5 Jan	6.00pm	Melita Stadium

UNDER 19

HOME TEAM	AWAY TEAM	DATE	KICK-OFF	GROUND
Central Coast Coasties	v Belconnen Blue Devils	Sat 4 Jan	7.00pm	Plum Park
Bonnyrigg White Eagles	v Bankstown City Lions	Sat 4 Jan	7.00pm	Serbian Centre
Blacktown City Demons	v A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt Tigers	Sat 4 Jan	7.00pm	Gabbie Stadium
Rockdale City Suns	v Fairfield Bulls	Sat 4 Jan	7.00pm	John Crehan Park
C'bury-M'ville Olympic	v Penrith Panthers	Sun 5 Jan	6.00pm	Henson Park
Parramatta Eagles	v St George Saints	Sun 5 Jan	6.00pm	Melita Stadium

UNDER 19

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Blacktown City Demons	5	4	1	0	21	4	13
A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt Tigers	5	4	0	1	11	5	12
Parramatta Eagles	5	3	2	0	12	5	11
Rockdale City Suns	5	3	1	1	10	7	10
Belconnen Blue Devils	5	2	2	1	9	7	8
C'bury-M'ville Olympic	5	2	1	2	14	10	7
Penrith Panthers	5	2	1	2	8	6	7
Bonnyrigg White Eagles	5	1	1	3	5	9	4
St George Saints	5	1	1	3	4	8	4
Bankstown City Lions	5	0	3	2	6	15	3
Central Coast Coasties	5	0	2	3	4	14	2
Fairfield Bulls	5	0	1	4	2	16	1

TOP GOALSCORERS

5 — Spase Najdoski (Rockdale City Suns),

4 — Luke Roodenberg (Blacktown City),

3 — Zlatko Arambasic (APIA-Leichhardt),
Rod Hutchison (Penrith Panthers),
James Monie (Central Coast),

2 — Paul Bourke (Canterbury-Marrickville), Steve Karavatakis (APIA-Leichhardt),
Shane Knight (Bonnyrigg White Eagles), Ante Moric (APIA-Leichhardt),
Marko Perinovic (Belconnen Blue Devils), Robert Todorovski (Rockdale City Suns),
Matthew Borg (Fairfield Bulls), Allan Picken (Canterbury-Marrickville)



SOCCER NSW



ROUND 6 PREVIEW

CENTRAL COAST

Central Coast Coasties

VS

Belconnen Blue Devils



Saturday 4th January, 2003 - 7.00pm
PLUIM PARK, LISAROW

Anybody predicting that the Coasties would have been on top of the competition table at the completion of round five would have been certified mad, but that's exactly the scenario, as they continue to remain unbeaten.

They are not taking the position lying down either calling an extra training session for Boxing Day in a bid to run out the Christmas day excess and concentrate on the visit of the Blue Devils.

All players but Peter Preston are expected to be available for selection, old Shirley, expected to

resume this week or next via the Under 19s.

Belconnen continue to make inroads this year and have lost just one of their five outings. They will however need to start converting their results into three points rather than one if they are to mount some pressure for the top five.

Ivo De Jesus has been training strongly during the break with coach Lino Fiorese expected to consider the enigmatic midfielder for selection this week.

Apart from his possible inclusion, the Blue Devils side will be at full strength and keen to make an

impact.

The long trip up from Canberra will definitely be a hurdle that the Blue Devils will need to overcome to compete against a Central Coast team brimming with confidence.

As Penrith found out a couple of weeks ago it ain't over till the fat lady sings at Pluim Park and 90 minutes of commitment will be needed to ensure maximum points.

With both sides evenly matched on paper, a draw looks the more likely result.

Definitely worth the price of petrol and admission to venture to Lisarow.



Bonnyrigg White Eagles

VS

Bankstown City Lions



Saturday 4th January, 2003 - 7.00pm
SERBIAN CENTRE, BONNYRIGG

This one looks a great game to be at. Both clubs are desperate for another win after a faltering campaign and it is likely to be very tense.

Bonnyrigg are still without the services of several key players and it is going to need the team to be at its best to conquer a side of Bankstown's pedigree.

Forget the results both clubs have achieved thus far.

Both have talent to burn.

Bankstown has suffered some reversals of late, none worse than the 4-1 drubbing at the hands of fierce rivals Rockdale City Suns at

Cringila.

There is no doubt that when Norman Tome and Colin Luff start to really fire - and the signs are there that they are not far off doing that - that Bankstown will hit someone for six.

This match provides the perfect opportunity. Bonnyrigg are anxious to show their own supporters that all is not lost yet and to provide an entertaining and attacking display.

This probably points to an open game, though it is bound to be competitive.

The absence of playmaker Fred

Umlil means that he will miss facing his old club and setting up chances for the likes of Kindness Agwu and co.

Bankstown will have extra motivation provided for them by Colin Luff who once carried the Bonnyrigg attack and will be hungry for goals on his return to the Serbian Centre.

'Luffy' would like nothing more than to get one over his old team mates and in the process get Bankstown back on track for a title tilt, which was their objective at the start of the campaign.



Blacktown City Demons

VS

A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt Tigers



Saturday 4th January, 2003 - 7.00pm
GABBIE STADIUM, BLACKTOWN

This looks as a clash of the titans. Unbeaten A.P.I.A.-Leichhardt, who beat Blacktown in the corresponding game last season, will have all guns blazing.

Demons' mentor, Brian Brown, who watched the Tigers in their last match against Parramatta in the company of their skipper Damon Langan and his own Damien Foxe will be working overtime trying to combat the power of the inner suburban side.

Langan returns from suspension for this one against his old club which he served for so long and he is sure to be fired up for a vintage performance at the heart of a defence

that needs to be extra sharp to nullify the threat of the on-fire Luke Roodenburg.

'Roods' has been a revelation in his Premier League already after moving in from Parramatta Power. Some of his goals have been gems and with strike partner Naoki Iwaya proving the perfect foil the A.P.I.A. defence is going to be kept very busy this Saturday night.

A.P.I.A. on the other hand has several players still sidelined with injury yet has managed to post some impressive results.

Its wins over Belconnen and Bonnyrigg may have been narrow

but they were convincing all the same, especially the latter.

Zlatko Arambasic may have scored three goals and not looked like getting many more, but his probing and promptings for partner Steve Karavatakis already show a lot of promise of things to come and if the latter seems to be at his goal-scoring best away from Lambert Park then that could spell trouble for the Demons.

This game should be the best of the season at The Gabbie and could go either way, like so many games in this most interesting of seasons.



Rockdale City Suns

VS

Fairfield Bulls



Saturday 4th January, 2003 - 7.00pm
JOHN CREHAN PARK, CRINGILA

After starting the season with two draws, the Suns have really turned their year around and moved into fifth spot on the ladder, unbeaten in their past three starts.

They will be without the talents of Eddie Wong (hamstring 2 weeks) and Alex Kotovich (knee & season) for the visit of the Bulls.

"It is not going to be an easy game," said Director of Coaching Bill Pilovski. "The Bulls might be last on the ladder but with the talent they have they are going to be a handful."

We need to keep a watchful eye

over Mathew Borg and Marc Hoenselaars that's for sure, but not at the expense of other players like Adam Peatey and Robert Angievski who are also capable of cutting a side to pieces."

The Bulls are a club in crisis with the recent departure of their football committee.

Mitchell Daley and Jason Connolly look to have recovered from injuries over the break and are set to start with coach Craig Sharpley signing ex Ryde City sweeper Eddie Giraldo as cover.

Luke Tomich who has impressed in recent weeks off the bench also

comes into calculations as the Bulls look to lift themselves from a two match losing streak.

Returning also to the Bulls lineup his youngster Ryan O'Shea. After being sidelined with a foot injury the player will look to slot into the Bulls defensive line that to date has conceded far too many goals. His pace at the back has been sorely missed and his return may be a God sent for Fairfield.

Not in their favour is their poor away form this year, with nothing to show for their two starts. With the Suns in such hot form, it's hard to look past them in this encounter.



C'bury-M'ville Olympic

VS

Penrith Panthers



Sunday 5 January, 2003 - 6.00pm
HENSON PARK, MARRICKVILLE

Buoyant after their 2-1 triumph at Jensen Park before the Christmas break Canterbury return to Henson Park for the visit of the resilient Penrith Panthers.

Penrith has been doing well so far and will pose a definite threat to the Berries.

Even without Peter Bennett, whose injury and imminent departure for Singapore means he will not be part of Tony Rasmussen's plans after all, Penrith look solid.

There seems nothing really wrong with the attack, well led by

Danny Hinton and Rod Hutchison and with Osvaldo El Ali as dangerous as ever when used in short bursts at any rate.

The Panthers are expecting some players back soon from the casualty list, to boost the midfield especially. The defence has been steely tough with Daniel Wells in great form and the whole team focused. It will not be easy for Canterbury who at least now has Andy Amegashie back in harness.

The big striker is looking an imposing presence in the side and now that Allan Picken is beginning

to settle once more in his new responsibilities of the captaincy the goals should start to flow.

It all looks like being a good sign for an entertaining spectacle and a closely contested one at that.

Perhaps Canterbury will go on with the job and record their first home win of the season.

They have played well at their Marrickville HQ without much luck thus far.

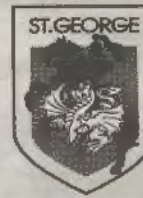
Penrith has yet to score a goal on their travels and has just the one point to show for their efforts.



Parramatta Eagles

VS

St George Saints



Sunday 5th January, 2003 - 6.00pm
MELITA STADIUM, SOUTH GRANVILLE

Wanted: Striker who can score approximately 10 to 15 goals per season. All applications should be directed to Eagles coach John Calleja.

While we might make light of the apparent lack of potency on the Parramatta forward line, I am afraid it's no laughing matter to the club and it's army of loyal supporters.

Every club goes through a bad patch, with the Eagles taking their turn. Mind you, there is no shortage of goalscoring talent with Mondello, Kukucka, Anderson and Gledhill all very capable, it's more

a question of when and Calleja will be hoping an outing against the enigmatic Saints might just be the tonic.

Speaking of which, the Saints have had more ups and downs than a fiddlers elbow this season, beating the Bulls and White Eagles, but being knocked over by Penrith and A.P.I.A.

Their meeting with Bonnyrigg was chock full of merit but away from home in the hostile surrounds of Melita Stadium, they may just do it tough.

Keep an eye out for the Saints great white hope - Bruno

Beddoni. Rested and refreshed after the Christmas break, he should just about be ready to pounce and make his presence felt.

With the signing of Abas Saad last week St George are looking to add experience to youth. Hopefully for the Saints this will provide the consistency in their performances.

The future of suspended Orhan Dincer will be decided on the 2nd January.

The prognosis isn't bright for the visitors with Calleja's boys tipped to find their scoring boots and put them to the sword.



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Top 10 New Years resolutions from the NSW Premier League

1. I will turn up to training on time
2. I will wash my gear the day after not the day before the match.
3. I won't question the coach's decision
4. I won't drop my head when we go down a goal after 30 seconds of play.
5. I won't dive needlessly in the penalty box.
6. I will value the judgement and opinions of my team mates (no matter how wrong they are).
7. I will not react to comments made from the crowd concerning my playing ability (or parentage).
8. I will make a conscious effort to retrieve to ball quickly in the last 10 minutes of a game even though we are up 2-1.
9. I promise not to go out to 4am the night before a game.
10. I won't eat hot dog's, pies, kebabs, pastizzi's, souvlaki or steak sandwiches an hour before the game.

As heard from the dressing room.

From everyone at Soccer NSW
we wish you all a Happy New Year
and look forward to a successful 2003.



SOCCER NSW

Junior Licence / Level 1 Coaching Course

"WHY SHOULD THE BOYS HAVE ALL THE FUN?"

When: Saturday 15th & Sunday the 16th of February 2003
What Time: 9.00am-5.00pm (both days)
Where: Valentine Sports park, Glenwood, NSW
Who: Any Women or Girls with an interest in Soccer
(must be over 15 years)
How Much: \$98.00 (including GST)



For more information or an application form,
contact Tricia at Soccer NSW
by email (tricia@soccernsw.com.au) or
phone (02) 9629 1800

For more information about Coaching
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STATE COACHING POSITIONS

Soccer NSW is seeking expressions of interest for the following
NSW State Team Coaching positions within the Elite Development
Program.

- Under 14 Boys
- Under 14 Girls
- Under 16 Girls
- Under 18 Girls

Essential Criteria:

- Minimum qualification of Senior Licence (ACC approved accreditation)
 - Experience working with elite youth soccer players
 - Sound knowledge of Soccer NSW Youth League structure and competition
 - Experience planning and implementing coaching programs at an elite level
 - Good communication and management skills
 - To be eligible for the U14 Boys position, coaches must be currently involved in the Elite Soccer Player (ESP) Program
- Soccer NSW is an equal opportunity employer and all applicants must complete a prohibited employment declaration.

Please forward your application by Friday the 17th January, 2003
marked Private & Confidential to:

Linda Christie
Human Resources Manager
Soccer NSW

Post - PO Box 6146, Baulkham Hills BC NSW 2153
Fax - 02 9629 3770
Email - linda@soccernsw.com.au

For more information phone 02 9629 1800 or email
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